



MANTHAN

THE PRELUDE OF PERSPECTIVES

the **UDGAM** *Memoir*



Conceptualised, owned & distributed by
Xavier Law School,
St. Xavier's University, Kolkata,
Premises No. IIIB - 1, Plot No. IIIB/1, Action Area IIIB,
Newtown, Kolkata - 700160 (West Bengal, India)

First Edition, 2025

Compiled, edited & designed by Umang Agarwal

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the prelude of perspectives

MANTHAN



“मन मारया तन बस में कीन्हा, हुआ भरम सब दूर,
बाहर से कुछ दीखत नाही, अंदर चमके नूर।

आपो त्याग जगत में बैठे, नहीं किसी से काम,
उनमें तो कुछ अंतर नाही, संत कहो या राम॥”

Those, who churn their mind, control their desires, and focus on a higher aim, transcend illusion and become equal to the divinity itself. The vision behind Manthan is driven largely by this belief. The belief - in Focus.

‘Manthan’, the 1st Annual Memoir Publication of Xavier Law School, seeks to encapsulate various diverse perspectives & reflections from students & personalities across the Nation, including but not limited to case analyses - on a variety of socio-legal themes that affect the Society & the Legal Framework of India, largely. This edition, being the first of many to come, shall focus on Problems & Solutions related to Honour Culture & Crimes, through opinions & thoughts by it’s contributors.

As the popular saying goes, “still waters run deep” - Manthan is an attempt to find depth & detail in stillness & strife. Originated from Sanskrit, the word ‘Manthan’ literally means “churning”. We believe in the ability of young student minds to churn the ocean of knowledge within, and from it the nectar of insight shall emerge. Just like the Ocean - difficult to navigate when disturbed, and smooth sailing in calm waves - the mind is at it’s best when calm & focused. Manthan, thereby, is an initiative to bring together a group of remarkable researchers & authors, and see if they could do something more than the curriculum demands them to.

As the cornerstone publication of UDGAM, it marks a huge milestone for the young minds behind it’s making, and serves the purpose of bringing together best of all worlds, in forming a collective effort on highlighting the society’s standpoint on the issue in focus, as well as suggesting solutions, through artistic & poetic media.

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message from **THE PATRON**



It is a moment of pride & joy for me to present the 1st Edition of 'Manthan' - The 1st Annual Memoir Publication by Xavier Law School, launched in the 1st Chapter of the Two-Day National Workshop - UDGAM 2025. The word "manthan", meaning "churning," evokes the image of searching within the depths to draw out insight and meaning.

This memoir reflects that process, bringing together reflections, research, and creative expressions that speak to the curiosity and commitment of our students. Placed alongside Udgam, 'Manthan' is not merely a record of events but a continuation of the dialogue that begins in the classroom and expands into society.

Manthan's pages hold voices that question, explore, and imagine reminding us that knowledge is never static but always unfolding. In engaging with themes such as "Honour Culture and Crimes," it preserves the effort to look beyond law as text, towards law as lived experience, shaped by values, culture, and conscience.

Inaugurating Manthan alongside UDGAM marks not a conclusion but the start of a tradition - one that encourages reflection, nurtures inquiry, and keeps alive the search for deeper understanding. May it grow with each edition, carrying forward ideas that inspire new beginnings and new horizons for Xavier Law School.

Rev. Dr. John Felix Raj, S.J.,
The Hon'ble Vice-Chancellor,
St. Xavier's University, Kolkata



The unveiling of Manthan marks a reflective and significant moment in the journey of Xavier Law School — a journey defined by inquiry, instruction, imagination and intellect. This inaugural edition does not seek to conclude debates; instead, it opens them. It brings together thoughts in transition, ideas taking shape, and reflections that dare to remain unfinished. For in law, as in life, it is often through uncertainty, curiosity, and conversation that understanding deepens and wisdom emerges.

What distinguishes Manthan is not merely what it contains, but what it represents: a conscious effort by our students and contributors to look beyond the evident, to write with authenticity and courage, and to ask enduring questions about justice, identity, culture, and the moral texture of our times. Placed alongside Udgam, Manthan brings a quieter, contemplative rhythm, a celebration not of achievement alone, but of engagement, thought, and the power of expression. It stands as a meeting point where academic rigour converses with personal insight, and where reason finds depth in empathy.

To all who have contributed to this initiative, thank you for your commitment to thinking, questioning, and creating. Through Manthan, you have not only documented ideas but also invited others to continue the dialogue. May Manthan grow as a space that welcomes complexity, values sincerity, and keeps alive the restless yet rewarding pursuit of meaning.

Dr. Ranjeeta Mukherjee,
The Dean, Xavier Law School,
St. Xavier's University, Kolkata

message from **THE DEAN**







about ST. XAVIER'S UNIVERSITY, KOLKATA

St. Xavier's University, Kolkata (SXUK) was born out of a vision to create a center of excellence in higher education in West Bengal. In 2011 Rev. Fr. Dr. John Felix Raj, S.J., and the St. Xavier's College (Calcutta) Alumni Association conceived 'SXC Vision 2020', which paved the way for the establishment of SXUK.

The University's journey gained momentum in 2012 when the Hon'ble Chief Minister of West Bengal, Dr. Mamata Banerjee, proposed the establishment of a university under the Jesuit banner. The Government of West Bengal generously allocated 17 acres of land for the University campus at Rajarhat.

A significant milestone was achieved in December 2016 when the St. Xavier's University Kolkata Act 2016 was passed. The Act came into effect on February 8, 2017, marking the beginning of a new era in higher education. Father Felix Raj SJ took office as the first Vice Chancellor on February 15, 2017.

The university was formally inaugurated on July 7, 2017, by Dr. Mamata Banerjee, Hon'ble Chief Minister of West Bengal. Today, SXUK stands as a testament to academic excellence in innovation and social responsibility.

SXUK offers a diverse range of undergraduate, postgraduate, and PhD programs through its Faculties of Commerce and Management, Arts and Social Studies, and Science. The University's academic programs are designed to foster intellectual growth, critical thinking, and creativity.

Xavier Business School (XBS) and Xavier Law School are two specialized schools within SXUK. XBS offers an AICTE-approved two-year MBA program, while Xavier Law School provides BCI-approved five-year integrated law programs.

As a Jesuit institution, SXUK is committed to forming men and women for others who embody ethical leadership, social responsibility, and compassion. With its strong emphasis on academic excellence, innovation, and social commitment, SXUK is poised to become a leading centre of excellence in higher education.

about **XAVIER LAW SCHOOL**



Upon approval from the Bar Council of India, Xavier Law School (XLS), a constituent unit of St. Xavier's University, Kolkata, introduced undergraduate law programmes on 3rd August, 2019. XLS offers Ph.D, LL.M. and two five-year integrated programmes B.A. LL.B.(Hons.) and B.Com. LL.B.(Hons.). The vision of XLS is to bring about excellence in the realm of professional education in law besides academic exposure in juridical studies as another applied domain of the social sciences discipline.

Rooted in and inspired by the Ignatian charism of forming 'men and women for others', XLS strives to train its students in the twin path of 'Satya' and 'Dharma'. While it is 'Dharma' to speak the truth, speaking the truth leads to the attainment of the ultimate 'Dharma' which is peace and prosperity of the individual and society. The mission of XLS is manifold. It intends to set international standards for legal education that are contemporary and relevant in the 21st century. It aims to promote academic exchange and academia-professional interface with the latest pedagogy and techniques. It attempts to bridge the spatial divide and take the benefits of education to the poor and marginalized for the purpose of their empowerment.

XLS, since its establishment has progressed with remarkable pace to bring its dreams to fruition. Since it has come into existence, it has witnessed a continuous improvement in terms of infrastructural amenities and more importantly in terms of achievements of its students. XLS has a dedicated library for its students along with a fully functional legal aid clinic that provides the necessary exposure to its students in terms of application of law.

message from THE CONVENERS



Dr. Prashna Samaddar,
Convener, Udgam 2025 ~ Chapter One
Assistant Professor, Xavier Law School

The memoir is a state-of-the-art effort by the Team of UDGAM to delve deep, rediscover and reverberate the huge panorama of honour culture present around us, and the way it is being practiced.

I am indebted to the entire Law School for giving us an opportunity of being a part of this literary work which is an assemblage of contribution from various minds who have thought of the given theme, and have come up with their mindful write-ups and pictorial representations.

I congratulate all the Faculty & Staff Members, as well as the Students, of Xavier Law School, once again, to provide such a beautiful platform.

The 1st Edition of Manthan, unveiled with UDGAM 2025, is not just a publication, it is a call to think, to question, and to transform. True to its spirit of “churning”, it seeks to draw meaning from dialogue, reflection, and shared experience.

In addressing themes such as “Honour Culture and Crimes”, Manthan reminds us that law is not confined to books or courts; it is lived in the choices we make, the values we uphold, and the justice we strive to ensure. It is a space where knowledge becomes conscience, and conscience inspires change



Dr. Ankita Chakraborty,
Co-Convener, Udgam 2025 - Chapter One
Assistant Professor, Xavier Law School

the THE CORE COMMITTEE



UMANG AGARWAL
DIRECTOR

While the 1st Chapter of Udgam has been laid on foundations of hope, this edition of Manthan, the first of many, is driven by the purest & oldest method of introspection known to mankind - 'focus'. The process of editing Manthan shall remain to be one of the most memorable parts of my life as a Law Student, for every word of this memoir represents the dedication of each contributor in expressing their opinions in the best form possible. Every thought in the articles herein, is backed by an innocent faith in the empathy of the readers. Therefore, I hope, that these pages inspire generations to come, to build upon, & continue it's legacy - to keep 'focus', alive. With this, I extend my warmest wishes to all those who played a role in it's making, as much as it may have been.



SUNEETI SARAF
CORE MEMBER

Brave one's own darkness, because the light within, shines all the brighter against it. The spirit of mind and heart woven together like pieces of the jigsaw of life; perfecting imperfections with miles to go and rules to follow. Inspire. Inculcate. Ignite.



NAZIA HUSSAIN KHAN
CORE MEMBER

In the name of honour, cultures sometimes silence the truth, dimming the spirit's light. Manthan calls us to churn old notions, to shift love from fear, and to weave a future where honour is in compassion, not cruelty.



KRITIKA AGARWAL
CORE MEMBER

The ocean is dark and treacherous, it has two sides, either warm & sunny, or dark & sinister. The truth is very similar. When uncovered, can make or break something. manthan inspires you to explore the unknown, cherish the undervalued and unlock your potential.



RUPSHA ROY
CORE MEMBER

Where desire strains against duty and honour demands performance, life becomes a stage for controlled defiance. In such cultures, crime is less about harm and more about disobedience, a breach in the fragile contract that binds identity to reputation.



SHREYASI CHAKRABARTI
CORE MEMBER

Courage originates from the Latin word "cor," meaning heart. Initially, it meant speaking one's mind from the heart. I believe true courage lies in speaking honestly and openly about ourselves, sharing our experiences, and being vulnerable – what I call "ordinary courage."



SHREYA SINGH
CORE MEMBER

The churning of existence stirs both nectar and poison, revealing the dual nature of desire. When governed by wisdom, it elevates the soul; when left unchecked, it binds in illusion. True divinity lies in discerning which essence to embrace.



SANJEEVANI SEN
CORE MEMBER

Standing on the silver horizon with the duality of both worlds, the man chooses the dim or the light due to the emancipation, unlike the red cloth blinding the eyes which differentiate between illusion and sensibility.



SOUMYA JHA
CORE MEMBER

Honour and dignity shine when desires are tempered, yet shame follows when they rule unchecked. Life's journey is not to escape desire, but to master it—transforming restless longing into a sacred force for the divine.

the ORGANIZING COMMITTEE



RITAM
BHATTACHARYA



SHREYA
PAUL



AROHAN
CHATTERJEE



ZEESHAN
KHAN



MAHEK
KAR MAJUMDER



NISHTHA
DEY



RAI
DAS



AISHEE
BISWAS



RAISA
ROY



WARISHA
NAZM



HIMADRI
AGARWAL



NILABHRO
KUMAR



SHAISTA
IQBAL



ROHINI
HAZRA



SOHINI
MITRA



SHREYA
GHOSAL



SOHINI
MITRA



SOHAM
DAS



ANUSHKA
ACHARYYA



SARANYA
BHATTACHARYA



UDGAM2025

CHAPTER
ONE
16-17 OCTOBER

HOPE BEGINS WHERE
JUSTICE PREVAILS

*an ode
to hopeful beginnings*

UDGAM



यतो धर्मस्ततो जयः

“WHERE THERE IS LAW
THERE IS VICTORY”

Dedicated to examining the legal, social, and emotional dimensions of Honour Culture & Crimes, “Udgam” is envisioned as an enriching addition to the legal curriculum, to encourage students to critically assess existing legal frameworks, judicial responses, and human rights implications - in light of the prevalent social & ethnographic conditions. Through discussions and performative engagements, students will gain a deeper understanding of honour culture & violence as both a societal & legal challenge - fostering informed advocacy & empathetic legal practice.

Udgam, meaning ‘origin’ in Sanskrit, denotes the starting point of a journey, movement, or process - whether it is the spring of a river, the inception of an idea, the birth of a tradition, or the first moment of creation. It breeds hope. Udgam is not just a beginning; it holds the essence of everything an entity may become; its strength, its course, its destiny, all flowing from that single, sacred point of emergence - Justice. To us, it symbolizes the very foundation of the ideal that law aims to achieve, for the prevalence of justice in a society bespeaks that hope lives on. Hope of equity, hope of integrity, and most importantly, hope of redemption.

the inter-college quiz

PANCHAJANYA

The Inter-College Quiz in Udgam 2025, titled 'Panchajanya' has been conceived as a space where knowledge becomes both a challenge and a celebration. Inspired by the conch of Shri Krishna in the Mahabharat, whose resonant call marked the assertion of truth and courage, the quiz carries the same spirit into the realm of ideas. It calls upon young minds across institutions to gather in pursuit of inquiry, reflection, and dialogue.

The quiz is not simply a contest of quick recall but a forum that engages participants with questions shaped by culture, ideals of law & justice, and global affairs, all viewed through the lens of 'Honour Culture & Crimes'. It encourages students to look beyond the immediate competition and to reflect on larger social and moral concerns that shape our times. In doing so, Panchajanya seeks to nurture both intellectual sharpness and social consciousness, making every round an experience of learning as much as of contest.

Placed within the broader framework of Udgam, the quiz serves as a bridge between academic rigor and collective reflection. It brings together the energy of youth, the seriousness of the theme, and the vibrancy of competition into a single confluence. Panchajanya is thus envisioned as more than a quiz; it is a call to think, to question, and to carry forward conversations that matter.

a confluence of shared opinions

THE SYMPOSIUM & THE PANEL DISCUSSION

The session will enable those in attendance to learn in great depth & detail about the perspectives that together frame the societal outlook towards the Culture & subsequent Criminal Activities pertaining to Honour. The Symposium on 'Honour Culture & Crimes', moderated by Ms. Moumita Layek (*XLS Batch of 2024*), aims to bridge the gap between legal theory and the complex social realities that underpin such offences. By bringing together experts from law, media, and civil society, it offers participants a multidimensional understanding of the issue - from statutory provisions to cultural contexts and enforcement challenges.

The Panel Discussion, moderated by Mr. Ratul Das (*Asst. Professor, Xavier Law School*), is aimed at fostering dialogue, collaboration and critical engagement with representatives from the Legal Field, Film Industry, Independent Media & Social Organisations - pertaining to related dimensions of Honour Culture and Crimes in India, with special emphasis on Honour Killings. By bringing together distinguished guests from the said industries & fields, the Panel Discussion seeks to spotlight the challenges faced by the victims, and theatrical expressions showcasing societal impact, while celebrating ongoing efforts towards equality, accessibility and legal empowerment. It envisions the institution's commitment to inclusive legal discourse & the broader goal of building a just and empathetic society.

about the SPEAKERS & GUESTS



MR. SABYASACHI CHAKRABORTY

ACTOR

(ESTEEMED GUEST IN PRIZE DISTRIBUTION & VALEDICTORY CEREMONY)

Sabyasachi Chakraborty, an eminent figure in Bengali theatre and cinema, has enthralled the audience for more than four decades through his authoritative screen presence and character acting. Admired across the country for interpreting Feluda and other unforgettable roles, he is both intellectual and charismatic on the stage as well as screen. An actor versatile enough, he has seamlessly balanced film, television, and theatre, leaving a permanent imprint on all these mediums. Awarded with numerous honors, his legacy rests in revolutionizing performance excellence.

ADV. RAJDEEP MAZUMDER

DEPUTY SOLICITOR-GENERAL OF INDIA, AT
CALCUTTA HIGH COURT

Advocate Rajdeep Mazumdar, a respected lawyer from Kolkata, brings with him years of experience across diverse areas of law, be it civil, criminal, corporate, or family matters. Admired for his integrity, dedication, and sharp legal acumen, he has recently been appointed as the Deputy Solicitor General of India for the High Court of Calcutta (PB), a role that reflects both his professional excellence and his commitment to upholding justice. He was appointed as a Senior Advocate by the Hon'ble High Court in 2024.



DR. SUDHIR MISRA

VIGILANCE AUTHORITY, KOLKATA MUNICIPAL CORPORATION
RETIRED IAS OFFICER

Being appointed as an IPS Officer in 1988, after completing his Post Graduation from Delhi University, Shri Sudhir Misra served for 33 years in the West Bengal Cadre, and retired in the rank of Director General & Inspector General of Police in 2021. Apart from serving as the District Superintendent of Police, Jt. Commissioner and Addnl. Commissioner of Kolkata Police, he also served in the CBI for 5 years as Superintendent of Police and Deputy Inspector General of Police. He is presently serving as the Vigilance Authority in Kolkata Municipal Corporation.

MS. TRINA CHAKRABARTI

DIRECTOR (EAST),
CHILD RIGHTS & YOU (CRY)

A Chevening Scholar with a Master's in Human Rights from the University of Essex and a TISS graduate, Ms. Chakrabarti began her career in CSR with the Tata Group and CARE India. Joining CRY in 2002, she has led Volunteer Action and now serves as Director for the East, also anchoring Volunteer Engagement and IT. Driven by her belief that children can change the world, she is dedicated to transforming young lives. Her leadership reflects a deep commitment to create sustainable change by empowering communities.





ADV. MIT GUHA ROY

ADVOCATE,
CALCUTTA HIGH COURT

Apart from having worked as a Correctional Home Visiting Lawyer, and Deputed Lawyer, providing legal aid and support to vulnerable groups, he is also a panelist as resource person at Doordarshan Bangla. He has also contributed to preserving historical records as an executive member of the Alipore Museum or the museum for memorable case records and also serving as an Honorary External Member under the POSH Act with several Govt and Non Govt institutions and Panel Counsel in State Legal Services Authority and High Court Legal Services Committee.

MS. NIVEDITA BHATTACHARJEE

MENTAL HEALTH
PRACTITIONER

Ms. Nivedita Bhattacharjee, Founder-Director of Persona, brings 40+ years of experience in theatre, communication, education, and mental health practice. A certified trainer with Trinity College, London, and the University of West London, she has consulted for publishers and schools on speech, drama, and life skills. An acclaimed theatre performer and TEDx speaker, she blends creativity and therapeutic expertise to inspire and empower individuals. Her lifelong mission remains to use her work as a tool for social transformation.



MR. DEBANJAN MAJHI

FILM CONSULTANT (UNICEF)
& FILMMAKER

A filmmaker with a background in civil engineering and visual communication, he was trained at the National Institute of Design. He has collaborated with PSBT, Netflix, Google, and Tata Steel Foundation, creating award-winning shorts, documentaries, and web content. Known for films like Yeti Obhijaan, Begum Jaan, and Gajon, he now serves as Film Consultant at UNICEF India while pursuing independent projects. His work reflects a deep commitment to blending creativity with social change.

MR. SATRAJIT SEN

FILM DIRECTOR
& PRODUCER

Satrajit Sen is a National Award-winning Director-Producer and Entrepreneur with 25+ years of experience in the Media Industry. Having worked for major television networks such as Star TV and the Zee group he has a 360 degree knowledge about content, marketing and distribution. A proven strategist, he has single handedly turned around the fortunes of companies he has been at the helm of. He is the founding director of Tripod Entertainment Pvt. Ltd. - a boutique film production house known for its unique selection of films.





MS. HEMCHHAYA DE
INDEPENDENT
JOURNALIST

Hemchhaya De is a seasoned journalist and editor with over 25 years of experience across print, digital, and international media. She has held editorial roles at leading publications including The Telegraph and Khaleej Times. She has written extensively on health, law, politics, education, and gender, and currently consults with global organisations including WHO. She is deeply passionate about literature, and human interest and rights narratives.

MS. ANINDITA RAY
CO-FOUNDER,
BE & MAKE

Ms. Anindita Ray has over 25 years of experience in the development and corporate sectors, with research spanning HIV/AIDS, drug prevention, child protection, education, and prison management. She is also a Core Committee Member of the Narcotic Cell, Lal Bazaar. She has led UN-supported research projects, trained prison officers, counselled inmates, and presented at international conferences, effectively combining research, policy, and grassroots work to drive meaningful social change.



the session MODERATORS



MR. RATUL DAS
ASSISTANT PROFESSOR,
XAVIER LAW SCHOOL
ST. XAVIER'S UNIVERSITY, KOLKATA

MODERATOR FOR THE
PANEL DISCUSSION



MS. MOUMITA LAYEK
LEGAL CONSULTANT,
JEYYAM GLOBAL FOODS LTD.
(XLS BATCH OF 2024)

MODERATOR FOR THE
SYMPOSIUM

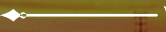
the **KEYNOTE & PLENARY PRESENTATIONS**



The Keynote Presentation on Day 1, preceding the Symposium, and the Plenary Presentation on Day 2, preceding the Panel Discussion - shall set the tone for all discussions to be pursued through the workshop, and give the audience members, the speakers & the guests an overview of the ambit of the issues that shall be highlighted in the sessions.



HONOUR VS. MORALITY:
 THE ROLE OF LAW, SOCIETY, AND
 INSTITUTIONS IN ADDRESSING
 HONOUR CULTURE & CRIMES



HONOUR BEHIND THE SCREEN:
 THE POWER OF ART &
 MEDIA IN SHAPING
 SOCIAL CONSCIENCE



RAGHAV JAJODIA
SPEAKER



AINA CHOTIA
SPEAKER



SAPTAK DAS
RESEARCHER



KASTOORIKA BASU
SPEAKER



PRITISHA ROY
SPEAKER



ABHIPRIYO DASGUPTA
RESEARCHER

the sound of becoming

MUSICAL PERFORMANCES

The cultural troupe of Xavier Law School, 'Dhvani', since its inception in August 2024, has always tried to explore uncharted territory in performing arts, be it dance, be it theatrics or even music. In yet another attempt to push the boundaries of possibilities, the Music Team of Dhvani has taken the initiative to integrate Udgam with melodies composed originally and lyrics written based on the theme of the workshop - Honour Culture & Crimes.

Dhvani

THE MUSIC TEAM



UMANG AGARWAL
COMPOSER-LYRICIST



SHREYANK BASU
PIANIST



HARIS DANIYEL
BASSIST



OJUS GURIA
GUITARIST



VINAYAK JAISWAL
TABLA/DHOLAK



HARSH SHARMA
VOCALIST



SNEHA SUR RAY
VOCALIST



HIYA SARKAR
VOCALIST



ANIK MITRA
VOCALIST



RITAM BHATTACHARYA
VOCALIST

Spread across both the days, the Musical Performances by Dhvani shall be one of the main highlights of the 2-day national workshop, mixed with medleys & mashups of renowned songs, set to take the audience to a realm where nothing matters except music. Music, beyond measure. Music, with meaning. With the vision of creation and the mission to mesmerize, Dhvani is all set to perform the following songs in the 1st Chapter of UDGAM 2025.

“MAAYI RE”

An emotional yet strengthening ode to the motherland, through a soldier's perspective.

“DHOOP LE AA”

An inspirational tribute to the women of our country; a ballad to break free from all bounds!

“SACH PUCHO TOH”

A heart-wrenching ghazal based on the loneliness, sadness & fear caused in one's mind due to the society's horrors.

the dance of doomsday

BISMIL

“जिंदा है वो जिंदा होगा, मुजरिम फिर शर्मिदा होगा।
होश में आजा, होश में आजा, पे बुलबुल-प-बिस्मिल॥”

The resumption of the UDGAM Mission on the 2nd Day demanded a point of strength, a break from the positivity, to remind people that humanity does not abide by discussions & debates, rather, it thrives on threat, and is weary of warnings more than warmth! Hence, a firm & sharp choreography on the song ‘Bismil’ from the 2014 film ‘Haider’ forms the preamble to the workshop on its 2nd day, i.e., the final day.



TEAM BISMIL



PRITI BANERJEE



SAYANI DAS



SRIYONA CHANDRA



ATTUNE SALAM



SAGAR SARDAR



ADRIJA SINGHA RAY



MEHULI



SNEHAL CHAKRABORTY



RIYA JAIN



HIYASHRI BAGCHI

Composed by Indian Film & Music Director, Vishal Bhardwaj, and written by the renowned lyricist Gulzar, this song provides a disclaimer meant for all those swayed by sweetness, exposed to all evil and prone to the darkness, ready to engulf every ounce of any positivity that may persist in the revolting struggles by humanity against its enemies. With a team of 10 powerful dancers, led by choreographer Priti Banerjee, the Team Bismil shall take the audience on an introspective journey!

incomplete, yet immortal LAILA MAJNU

“दास्तान-ए-लैला-मजनू शक्स शक्स दोहराएगा।
पत्थर का ढेर ये आज ये कल का ताज महल कहलाएगा॥”

To pierce through the haze of romanticism and confront the brutality behind tradition, a visceral reimagination of the legend of Laila–Majnu shall be enacted as “Bekas Beeti”, transforming the tale into a mirror of honour crimes, where love is punished and silence is enforced. Adapted & directed by Umang Agarwal, & choreographed by Soumya Jha, the theatrical enactment seeks to remind audiences of the cruelty of pride masquerading as virtue.

TEAM BEKAS BEETI



UMANG AGARWAL
DIRECTOR



SOUMYA JHA
CHOREOGRAPHER (NARRATOR)



SHOBHNA KASHYAP
ACTOR (LAILA)



ISHAN MONDAL
ACTOR (MAJNU)



EMUN AMAN
ACTOR (JR. LAILA)



SK SAHIL
ACTOR (JR. MAJNU)



SAGNIK CHAKRABORTY
ACTOR (JAWANBAKHT)



ISHITA THACKER
ACTOR (LAILA'S MOTHER)



NILABHRO KUMAR
ACTOR (MAJNU'S FATHER)



BHARGAB RAY
ACTOR (TABREZ)



HARSHINI JHUNJHUNWALA
ACTOR (LAILA'S FATHER)



BRISTI CHAKRABORTY
ACTOR (TEACHER)



SHUBHANGI BHATTACHARYA
ACTOR (JALLAAD)



NIKITA TIRKEY
LEAD DANCER



MEHNAZ SHEIKH
LEAD DANCER



SNEHA DAS
LEAD DANCER



SHINJINI SIKDER
LEAD DANCER



RADHIKA JHUNJHUNWALA
LEAD DANCER



SHRUTI KEDIA
LEAD DANCER



TANUSHREE BAID
LEAD DANCER

inspiring narratives by the **SURVIVOR-LEADERS**



“Justice is not a miracle; it is a system we choose to build. AHTUs that respond, witness protection that shelters truth, video conferencing that spares survivors hostile rooms, and victim compensation that funds recovery - these are not favors, they are rights. When we center fearless survivor voices, courts listen, communities change, and the path to dignity clears. The more we invest in protection and care, the more justice will be served - this is the dream of our survivors’ leadership movement.”

~ Tithi Das

Survivor and Expert by Experience



JAYANTI’S TESTAMENT

Architect of Economic Justice

I survived human trafficking, returning to a community drowning me in silence and shame. The legal battle for victim compensation demanded two years of relentless court visits, facing officials who dismissed my trauma. When I finally secured INR 1.5 lakh, I rejected all attempts to control how I used these funds - this was my agency. I invested strategically: purchasing land and launching an embroidery business that now employs other vulnerable women. My focus is singular - building financial independence that no one can strip away. I learned that waiting for societal validation traps you in victimhood. True transformation begins when we leverage our experience into shared economic power, creating opportunities where exploitation once thrived. We are not symbols of harm; we are authors of systemic change through enterprise and solidarity.

“When society calls violence a ‘sin’ and burdens the survivor with ‘honour,’ it grants the offender impunity. Honor does not live in a woman’s silence; it lives in our refusal to let harm hide. Move ‘honour’ from her shoulders to our collective duty - truth, care, and justice. Real honor is when the public: stand with survivors, confront harm, and make justice non-negotiable.”

~ Nasima Khatun

Survivor and Expert by Experience



KAVITA'S VISION

Leading Systemic Transformation

After surviving sex trafficking, I sought justice only to face a system designed to break me - delays, threats, and my family's home demolished due to my trafficker's political network. The compensation process took three years, delivering only partial restitution after exhausting legal battles. But I refused to be defined by bureaucratic indifference. I channeled accessible funds into growing my spice business, sourcing directly from wholesale markets to build sustainable income. Today, I lead a survivors' collective, training women to navigate legal systems and demand their rightful compensation. My message is clear: we must master the processes designed to silence us. Solidarity emerges when survivors stop being case files and become community leaders dismantling the very structures that enabled our exploitation. Our collective power lies in becoming architects of the justice we demand.



on Honour Culture & Crimes

from the editorial board

“MAANAS”



'Maanas' includes excerpts selected from 'The UDGAM Dossier' - an informative document prepared through the extensive research conducted on "Honour Culture & Crimes", by the Research Division of UDGAM Chapter One.

This sessions, 'Maanas', stands for the 'intent' behind the organisation & the fundamental conceptualisation of Udgam, as a Socio-Legal Academic Workshop. It seeks to pursue the primary goal of spreading awareness through information.

It seeks to explore Honour Culture & Crimes through various lenses, ranging from legal to industrial perspectives, and taking into considerations all forms of media that may play any part in spreading awareness against it, or prevent it from multiplying.

HONOUR OR HARM?

UNMASKING THE CRIMES BEHIND TRADITION

This system is not merely an abstract cultural value; it is a political tool designed to maintain existing power structures. When a couple defies caste or religious boundaries, the "honour" that is defended is not a moral principle but the integrity of the caste line and the patriarchal control over female reproduction. The violence that follows is, therefore, a political act intended to punish transgression and enforce a rigid social order. Extra-legal bodies, such as the khap panchayats prominent in anthropological research, often act as parallel authorities, issuing diktats that openly undermine personal liberty and constitutional law.

This cultural framework is in direct and irreconcilable conflict with the foundational guarantees of the Indian Constitution. Article 21 (Right to Life and Personal Liberty) and Article 19 (Freedom of Association) provide a legal shield for individual choice in matters of life and partnership. The Supreme Court of India has repeatedly affirmed this principle, culminating in the landmark 2018 judgment in *Shakti Vahini v. Union of India*. In this case, the Court explicitly condemned community interference in adult relationships, declaring that any attempt to curb the choice of marriage is a violation of fundamental rights. Understanding this clash is essential, for honour crimes are not isolated acts of brutality. They are the structured, violent expressions of a cultural system that prizes a manufactured notion of collective reputation over the fundamental dignity and liberty of the individual.

THE SHADOW NUMBERS: QUANTIFYING A HIDDEN CRIME

To grasp the true scale of honour-based violence, one must look beyond official statistics, which paint a misleading picture of a rare and sporadic crime. According to data from the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) presented to the Lok Sabha, murders classified as "honour killings" represent a minuscule fraction of total homicides in India. In 2020, out of 29,193 murders, only 25 were recorded as honour killings. This figure rose to 33 in 2021 before dropping to 18 in 2022.



A state-wise analysis reveals even more telling discrepancies, suggesting a problem not with the prevalence of the crime, but with its classification.

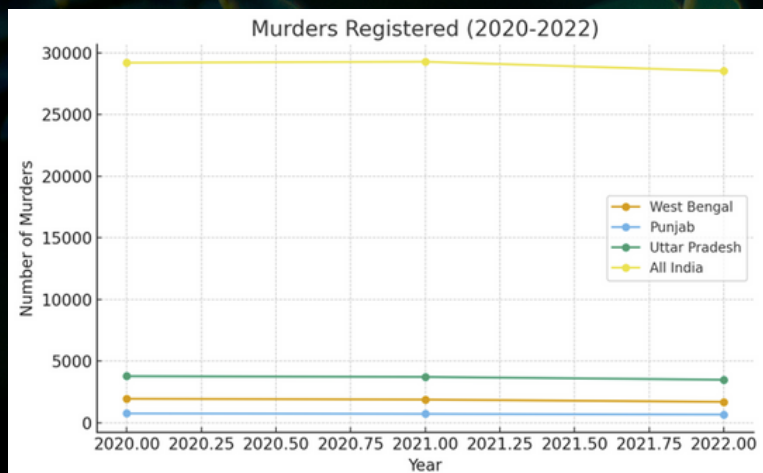
STATE	MURDERS (2020)	MURDERS (2021)	MURDERS (2022)	HONOUR KILLINGS (2020)	HONOUR KILLINGS (2021)	HONOUR KILLINGS (2022)
West Bengal	1,948	1,884	1,696	0	0	0
Punjab	757	723	670	4	8	4
Uttar Pradesh	3,779	3,717	3,491	0	2	0
India (Total)	29,193	29,272	28,522	25	33	18

Source: NCRB Crime in India 2020–2022 & MHA data



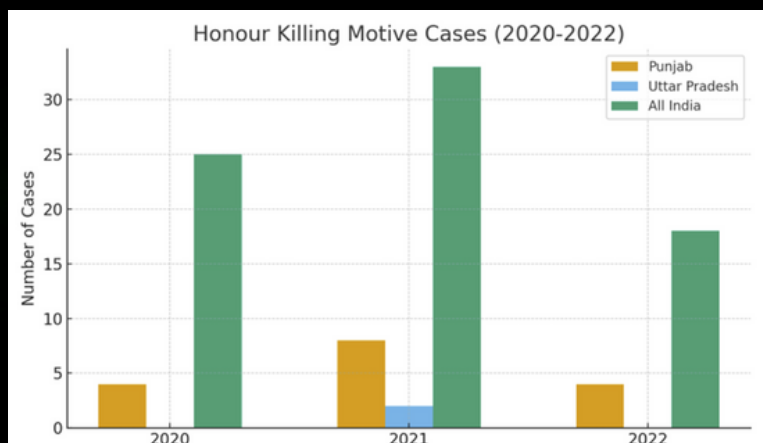
The data shows that Punjab consistently reports cases, while West Bengal, a state with over 1,600 murders annually, reported zero honour killings for three consecutive years. Similarly, Uttar Pradesh, with the highest number of murders in the dataset, recorded only two cases in three years. This statistical anomaly is highly improbable and points directly to a systemic failure in documentation.

The following graphs visualize this disparity. The first shows the substantial number of total murders, providing context for how small the official honour killing figures are. The second highlights the volatility and low count of murders specifically attributed to an honour motive.



Graph 1: Murders Registered (2020–2022)

Source: NCRB Crime in India 2020–2022



Graph 2: Honour Killing Motive Cases (2020–2022)

Source: MHA data (Lok Sabha Unstarred Question No. 1954, 11 March 2025)

The vast gap between these official numbers and the lived reality of the crime is where the true story lies. Scholars, and even the NCRB in its own annotations, caution that these figures represent a severe undercount. The primary reason for this is twofold. First, the absence of a distinct legal category for "honour crimes" in national law forces police to file cases under broader, generic headings such as "family disputes", "love affairs", or even "suicide", effectively erasing the specific motive from the official record. Second, immense social pressure often leads to the suppression of complaints altogether.

This is not merely a clerical issue; it is a systemic choice that creates a "statistical void". By not creating a legal category, the state avoids officially acknowledging a crime that exposes deep-seated social failures related to caste and patriarchy. This statistical invisibility creates a dangerous feedback loop: because the official numbers are low, the problem is not treated as a policy priority, leading to an under-allocation of resources for prevention and protection. This inaction, in turn, allows the toxic cultural norms that produce the violence to persist unchallenged. The failure to count the crime thus becomes a form of passive state complicity.

The most powerful evidence of this underreporting comes from the work of non-governmental organizations. While the NCRB recorded only 25-33 honour killings annually across the entire nation, grassroots organizations in the state of Tamil Nadu alone documented 195 such murders over a five-year period. This staggering contrast reveals that honour-based violence is not a rare anomaly but a widespread, hidden epidemic.

THE INTERVENERS: AN ECOSYSTEM OF RESPONSE AND REFUGE

In the face of legislative gaps and societal complicity, a fragile but determined ecosystem of protection has emerged to combat honour crimes. This network, comprising non-governmental organizations, police, courts, advocates, and mental health practitioners, functions as an interdependent chain, where the failure of one link can jeopardize the entire system of support for survivors.

THE FRONTLINE: NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS (NGOS)

NGOs are often the first responders and the primary catalysts for action. They step into the void left by state indifference, performing functions crucial for both justice and survival. Their primary role is documentation; through field studies and survivor interviews, they gather the qualitative and quantitative data that exposes the true scale of the crisis, moving beyond the abstraction of flawed official statistics. By bringing survivor narratives into the public domain, they challenge the silence and stigma surrounding these crimes. Furthermore, NGOs are relentless advocates, pushing for legal reforms like the proposed "Freedom of Marriage and Association and Prohibition of Crimes in the Name of Honour Bill, 2022" and demanding better data collection practices from law enforcement. Most critically, they provide direct, tangible support. Organizations like the Love Commandos offer safe havens and legal aid to couples on the run, providing a lifeline when families and communities have become a threat.

THE STATE'S ARM: POLICE



Guided by landmark judicial directives, police forces are increasingly shifting from a purely reactive, post-crime role to one of proactive prevention. The Supreme Court's judgments in *Lata Singh v. State of U.P.* (2006) and *Shakti Vahini v. Union of India* (2018) have established a clear procedural mandate. This process begins the moment a threat is reported: every complaint must be promptly recorded in the station diary to create an accountable paper trail. An FIR must be registered without delay, explicitly noting the "honour motive" to ensure correct classification.

This is followed by a structured risk assessment and, where necessary, the immediate relocation of the threatened couple to a police-protected safe house.

Successful interventions, such as the 2023 rescue of an inter-caste couple from kidnappers in Jaipur and the establishment of "protection homes" in districts across Haryana, demonstrate that proactive policing can save lives and affirm that the law stands with individual liberty, not with regressive community diktats.



THE LEGAL BASTION: COURTS AND ADVOCATES

In the absence of a dedicated national law, the judiciary and legal advocates have become the primary architects of the legal framework against honour crimes. Courts have consistently expanded the scope of constitutional protections, interpreting Articles 19 and 21 to firmly establish the right to choose one's partner as a fundamental aspect of personal liberty, as seen in cases like *Lata Singh and Shafin Jahan v. Asokan*. Through the *Shakti Vahini* judgment, the Supreme Court issued binding preventive, remedial, and punitive guidelines that now function as de facto law for states to follow. Courts have also made it clear that "honour" can never be a mitigating factor in murder, but rather an aggravating one that warrants severe punishment, as established in *Bhagwan Dass v. State (NCT of Delhi)*.

Advocates are the agents who activate this legal machinery. They file urgent writs of habeas corpus to free individuals from unlawful confinement, ensure that FIRs correctly frame the crime's motive, and secure protection for vulnerable witnesses. The Kausalya–Shankar case in Tamil Nadu is a powerful example of this synergy. Strong advocacy ensured the brutal murder of Shankar, a Dalit youth, was tried specifically as a caste-based honour killing, leading to a landmark conviction against his wife Kausalya's family and setting a powerful precedent.

THE HEALERS: MENTAL HEALTH PRACTITIONERS

The psychological toll of honour-based violence is immense, and mental health practitioners play a vital, though often overlooked, role in the ecosystem of support. Survivors frequently suffer from severe trauma, anxiety, depression, and internalized guilt. Practitioners provide immediate crisis intervention and long-term, trauma-informed therapies like Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) to help survivors rebuild their sense of self-worth and autonomy. Their role extends beyond individual care; they collaborate with police and courts on risk assessments and safety planning, and they prepare survivors for the arduous judicial process in a way that minimizes re-traumatization. The case of Kausalya, who survived the attack that killed her husband Shankar, is illustrative. Supported by intensive mental health care, she was able to navigate her profound grief, transforming from a victim into a prominent anti-caste activist—a testament to the power of healing in the fight for justice.

THE CULTURAL RECKONING: ARTS AND MEDIA AS AGENTS OF CHANGE

The fight against honour culture is waged not only in courtrooms and police stations but also in the court of public opinion. Here, the media and the arts have become powerful agents of change, creating a cultural counter-narrative that challenges the traditional justifications for honour-based violence and reframes the public's understanding of the issue. By stripping these acts of their cultural legitimacy and re-labeling them as atrocities, this counter-narrative generates the moral outrage and social will necessary for legal and political progress.

THE MEDIA AS A MEGAPHONE

Journalism plays a critical role in dragging these crimes from the shadows of "private family matters" into the public square. Media coverage informs the public, pressures law enforcement and judicial authorities to act, and amplifies the voices of survivors, giving them a platform to share their experiences. The Manoj-Babli honour killing case from Haryana (2007) stands as a seminal example of the media's impact. Manoj and Babli were murdered for marrying within the same gotra (clan) on the orders of a khap panchayat. It was sustained and widespread media reporting that first pressured the police to file an FIR against the powerful perpetrators. The relentless coverage highlighted the brutality of the crime and the systemic failure to protect the couple, catalyzing a judicial process that resulted in a landmark conviction, including the first-ever capital punishment verdict in an Indian honour killing case. The case depicts a direct causal link between media scrutiny & the delivery of justice.

NH10 uses the social thriller genre to expose the fragility of modern, urban India. It contrasts the corporate world of Gurgaon with the feudal realities of the rural hinterland, suggesting that constitutional democracy is a thin veneer that dissolves in the face of deep-seated caste power. The film argues that these are not two separate Indias, but a single, deeply fractured society where one system violently polices the boundaries of the other. Films like Article 15 and Jai Bhim also reflect on the casteist culture prevailing in our society, even today.



In music, songs like Badshah's 'Pinjra' (Cage) use metaphor to critique the confinement of women under honour codes. Poetry, such as Atul Chandra Sarkar's 'Honor Killing: No Honour', offers an intense emotional lens on the brutality and collective complicity of such acts.

The Marathi blockbuster *Sairat* is perhaps the most powerful cinematic indictment of honour culture. It masterfully employs the conventions of a classic romantic drama, with lush music and idealized love, to build a deep emotional investment in its young, inter-caste protagonists.



This makes its climax all the more devastating. The couple is brutally murdered in a final scene devoid of dialogue or score, forcing the audience to confront the raw, unvarnished reality of caste violence without the comfort of a cinematic resolution.

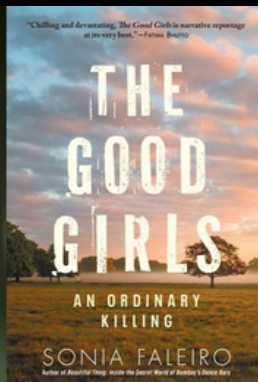
The final, haunting image of their child's bloody footprints turns a love story into a lasting social critique that lingers in the public consciousness.

Very recently, the Official Hindi Adaptation of Mari Selvaraj's 'Pariyerum Perumal' (2018, Tamil), released in 2025, which very boldly changed the subtle & sad ending of the original screenplay and adapted it into a more firesome version where the female protagonist fights back & raises her voice against the oppression of the male protagonist by her upper-caste family, instead of being completely oblivious to the situation, like in Mari Selvaraj's script.



THE WIDER CULTURAL CANVAS

This cultural conversation extends across various art forms, each translating the cold statistics of honour crimes into visceral, human experiences. Non-fiction works like Sonia Faleiro's *The Good Girls: An Ordinary Killing* provide meticulous, empathetic documentation of real cases, while fiction like Awaiz Khan's *No Honour* explores the internal struggles against patriarchal structures.



Visual art also plays a role; Jaishri Abichandani's installation 'Ode to Manoj and Babli' memorializes the slain couple, transforming a news story into a permanent cultural memory and ensuring they are not forgotten. Together, these cultural interventions are redefining honour, shifting it from a justification for violence to a call for moral courage.

FORGING A NEW HONOUR: LEGAL PROGRESS AND THE PATH AHEAD

While the cultural and societal battle against honour-based violence is ongoing, significant progress has been made in forging a legal framework to protect individual liberty. This framework, built largely through proactive judicial intervention rather than legislative action, rests on a constitutional foundation and is slowly being institutionalized through policy measures. However, critical gaps remain, highlighting the long path still ahead.

The legal fight is anchored in the core tenets of the Indian Constitution: Article 14 (Equality), Article 19 (Freedom of Association), and Article 21 (Right to Life and Personal Liberty). The Supreme Court has repeatedly affirmed that these rights protect an adult's autonomy to choose a life partner, a choice that cannot be vetoed by family, community, or clan. Despite this constitutional clarity, there is no standalone national law that specifically defines and punishes "honour killings".

Instead, these crimes are prosecuted under existing provisions of the penal code—now the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS)—such as Section 101 for murder, alongside sections for criminal conspiracy, abetment, and intimidation. A crucial judicial principle, established in cases like *Bhagwan Dass v. State (NCT of Delhi)*, is that a motive of "honour" is to be treated as an aggravating factor in sentencing, not a mitigating one.

In the vacuum of legislative will, the judiciary has effectively become a *de facto* legislature on this issue. The Supreme Court's 2018 judgment in *Shakti Vahini v. Union of India* stands as the most comprehensive legal and policy framework to date. The Court did not merely interpret the law; it created a detailed, prescriptive set of guidelines for state governments and police forces to follow. These guidelines are structured around three pillars:

- I. **Preventive Measures:** Requiring states to identify districts vulnerable to honour crimes, proactively monitor unlawful community assemblies (khap panchayats), and use preventive sections of the law to stop them from issuing illegal diktats.
- II. **Remedial Measures:** Mandating the establishment of safe houses in every district to shelter couples under threat, providing them with police protection, and ensuring the prompt registration of FIRs when threats are reported.
- III. **Punitive Measures:** Calling for departmental action against police officers who fail to act on complaints and directing that honour killing cases be tried in fast-track courts, with a goal of concluding trials within six months.

These judicially mandated directives reveal a critical dynamic: when the political branches of government are unable or unwilling to tackle a deeply entrenched social evil, the judiciary has stepped in to enforce constitutional morality over social tradition. While this activism has been the primary driver of progress, it is not a substitute for robust, democratically enacted legislation. Attempts to pass a national law, such as the Prevention of Crimes in the Name of Honour & Tradition Bill of 2010 and the recommendations of the 242nd Law Commission Report, have stalled. In contrast, some states have moved forward; Rajasthan, for instance, passed an act in 2019 that specifically criminalizes interference with matrimonial alliances by community groups.

CONCLUSION

The journey to dismantle the architecture of honour-based violence is far from over. Systemic underreporting continues to obscure the true scale of the problem, social stigma silences countless victims, and entrenched patriarchal norms remain a formidable barrier. Yet, the progress achieved is undeniable. The combined efforts of civil society, law enforcement, the judiciary, mental health professionals, and a newly awakened public consciousness have created a powerful momentum for change. A framework for protecting individual dignity is being built, piece by piece, through landmark court rulings, proactive policing, trauma-informed support, and a cultural narrative that increasingly champions love and liberty over oppressive traditions. The challenge ahead is to translate this judicially driven progress into a comprehensive national law and to foster a societal transformation where the only honour worth defending is the one that respects the fundamental right of every individual to live and love freely.



THE UNFINISHED REVOLUTION

HOW INDIA'S NEW CRIMINAL CODE PERPETUATES A 163-YEAR-OLD BLINDNESS

Dr. Kaustav Choudhury
Assistant Professor, Xavier Law School, St. Xavier's University, Kolkata

On a sweltering April morning in 2025, Chief Justice Sanjiv Khanna's voice cut through the Supreme Court's chambers with barely concealed frustration. "This is an out and out murder case. This is a case of honour killing", he declared, staring down lawyers who suggested that the brutal beating death of 26-year-old Zia-ur Rahman was merely "culpable homicide".

The young man's crime? Falling in love across faith lines. His punishment? Being bludgeoned to death with iron rods by her family members who couldn't tolerate the "dishonour."

What makes this case particularly jarring isn't just the medieval brutality—it's that in 2025, India's highest court was still grappling with the same legal vacuum that has plagued the subcontinent since colonial times. Despite replacing the 163-year-old Indian Penal Code with the supposedly modern *Bhartiya Nyaya Sanhita* (BNS) in 2023, India's criminal law remains wilfully blind to honour-based violence.

THE GREAT TRANSITION THAT CHANGED NOTHING

The transition from IPC to BNS was heralded as liberation from colonial legal frameworks. Parliament sessions echoed with speeches about "atmanirbhar" justice and modern sensibilities. Yet when it comes to honour crimes, the new code reads like a carbon copy — a missed opportunity that would be ridiculous if it weren't tragic.

Under the IPC, honour killings were prosecuted under Section 300 (murder) and Section 302 (punishment). Under the BNS, they're prosecuted under Section 101 (murder) and Section 103(1) (punishment). The section numbers changed; the legal blindness remained. (Anti-Caste Activists Propose Bill to End 'Honor Killings' | The Swaddle, n.d.)

The only innovation is BNS Section 103(2), addressing group murders by five or more persons "on the ground of race, caste or community." But most honour killings involve smaller family units—a father, brother, and uncle planning a daughter's death. They fall through the cracks.

The Supreme Court's exasperation with legislative inaction has been building since 2006. In the landmark 2018 *Shakti Vahini* case, Justice Dipak Misra's bench didn't mince words: the legislature must enact specific anti-honour killing legislation after documenting 288 cases between 2014-2016.

"Honor killings are considered murder under Section 300," the government responded, arguing existing laws were sufficient. The Court wasn't buying it, declaring Khap Panchayats unconstitutional and directing states to establish protection cells.

Seven years later, the legislative response remains deafening silence.

THE APRIL 2025 WAKE-UP CALL

This apathy faced harsh scrutiny when the Supreme Court delivered two scathing April 2025 judgments. In the Kannagi-Murugesan case, Justice Sudhanshu Dhulia upheld convictions of eleven people—including two police officers—for the 2003 Tamil Nadu honour killing of an inter-caste couple.

"This most dishonourable act goes by the name of honour-killing... the ugly reality of our deeply entrenched caste structure," Justice Dhulia wrote. "Honour-killing must get a strong measure of punishment". Yet even as it awarded ₹5 lakh compensation, the Court's hands remained tied by legislative absence.

THE NUMBERS BEHIND THE VACUUM

NCRB data shows 25 officially recorded honour killings in 2020, 33 in 2021, and 18 in 2022—just cases explicitly tagged as "honour motivated". The real numbers tell a different story. The Law Commission's 2012 Report No. 242 acknowledged honor killings as "serious violation of human rights" yet concluded there was "no need" to add specific offenses to the IPC. This recommendation continues to justify government inaction thirteen years later.

THE RAJASTHAN EXCEPTION

Against national inaction, Rajasthan stands alone. Its 2019 "Prohibition of Interference with Freedom of Matrimonial Alliances" Act mandates death penalty or life imprisonment for honour killings and criminalizes community assemblies condemning legal marriages.

CONSTITUTIONAL CONTRADICTION

The legal vacuum contradicts India's constitutional commitments. Articles 14, 15, 19, and 21 protect the very rights honour crimes violate. The Special Marriage Act explicitly legalizes inter-caste marriages, yet when families murder children for exercising these rights, criminal law treats it as ordinary homicide.

THE PRICE OF BLINDNESS

Each unpunished honour killing reinforces social hierarchies the Constitution seeks to dismantle. When families murder children for marrying across caste lines and face only ordinary murder charges, it tells society that caste matters more than law.

The BNS missed a historic opportunity to align criminal law with constitutional values. Multiple draft bills exist, the Rajasthan model provides templates, and international practices offer guidance. What's missing is the legislative will to confront traditional power structures.

The revolution from colonial to contemporary criminal law remains unfinished. Until it's completed, honour will continue to kill while the law continues to look away—a wilful blindness that makes mockery of constitutional promises and democratic ideals.

THE SILENCED LIGHT

POETRY

Ms. Shivani Pahuja

Assistant Professor, Xavier Law School, St. Xavier's University, Kolkata

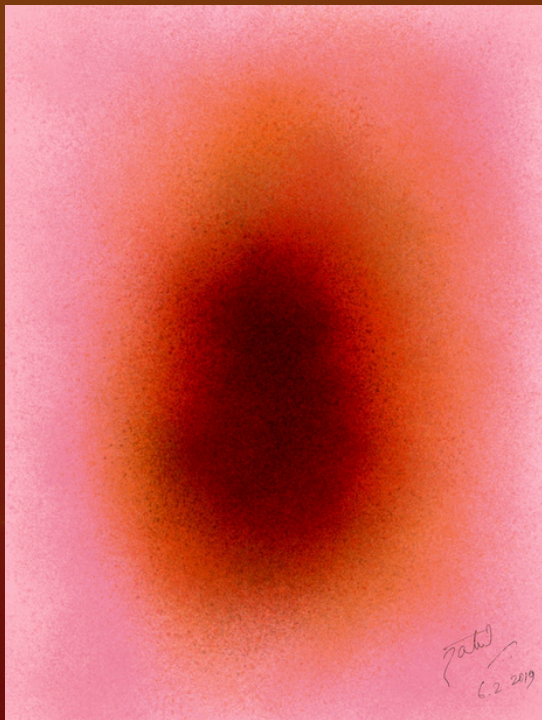
In her eyes there shone a light—
Freedom's spark, and love's delight,
She saw that radiance mirrored bright,
And two hearts danced, unseen by night.

Love blossomed, gentle, unforeseen,
A stolen smile, a world serene.
Yet storms brewed fierce, tradition torn,
By angry hands, with hatred sworn.

They struck her love, broke hope apart,
Bound her dreams in crimson art.
They call it honour-
yet the colour's red,
Blood on hands for words unsaid.

Her laughter stilled, her voice withdrawn,
A heavy silence pressed at dawn.
The light they feared, now quietly shut,
Her memory lingers-never cut.

But somewhere, through oppressive gloom,
Another soul will break the tomb.
For honour's name is not dismay,
And love will always find its way.



INNOCENCE FESTERED

by Mr. Ratul Das,
Assistant Professor, Xavier Law School
St. Xavier's University, Kolkata



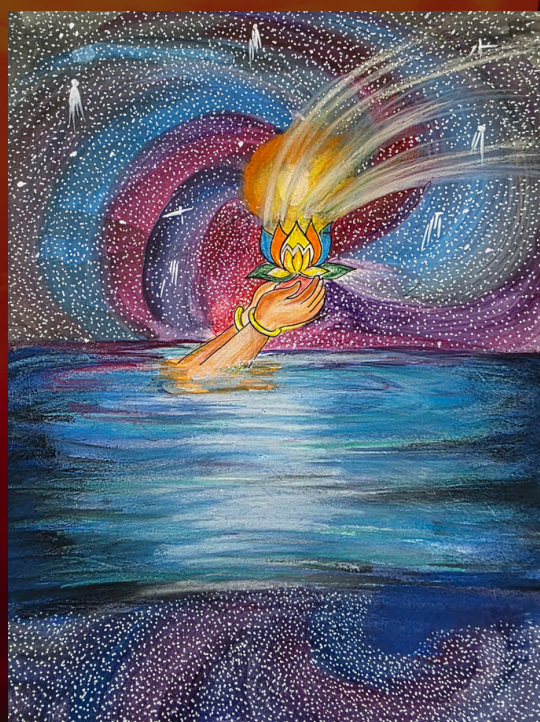
BURA NA MAANO

by Mr. Ratul Das,
Assistant Professor, Xavier Law School
St. Xavier's University, Kolkata



স্বপ্ন ভঙ্গ

by Nishtha Dey,
Student, Xavier Law School
St. Xavier's University, Kolkata



শতদ্র

by Rashi Agarwal,
Student, Xavier Law School
St. Xavier's University, Kolkata

THE MAKING & BREAKING OF SATI

FROM DEVOTION TO OPPRESSION



Harshini Jhunjhunwala

Xavier Law School, St. Xavier's University, Kolkata

In the Shekhawati region of Rajasthan, in the northernmost corner of the state bordering Haryana, lies the historic city of Jhunjhunu. This quaint city is my ancestral home, the place where my forefathers came from. Known both for the number of soldiers it contributes to the Indian armed forces and for its grand havelis, Jhunjhunu is also home to one of India's most revered shrines — the Rani Sati Dadi temple, the largest of its kind. Worshipped in many households, like mine, across the country, Rani Sati Dadi is remembered as the first ever sati among the thirteen sati devis venerated in tradition. Over time, her story became a benchmark for devotion and sacrifice, inspiring generations. Yet, the reverence accorded to her gradually evolved into a wider social practice, one that turned into the dangerous and coercive ritual of sati.



What was a deeply personal act of love and courage in Rani Sati's story transformed, over centuries, into an institutionalised expectation. Widows were pressured, even forced, to immolate themselves on their husband's pyre, with society presenting it as the ultimate expression of loyalty. This shift illustrated how honour was weaponised; a widow's survival was equated with shame, while her death was glorified as heroism. Instead of preserving dignity, honour became a tool to enforce control.

The practice thrived on distorted values. The natural right to live was subordinated to rigid ideals of purity and sacrifice. Priests and community leaders upheld it as sacred duty, while families sometimes used it to secure property or avoid supporting a widow. Women's agency was erased, and survival itself was cast as cowardice. The ideology surrounding sati thus turned devotion into oppression.

The path to eradication shows how law, media, and social reform can together dismantle harmful traditions. Reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy campaigned vigorously against sati, arguing that it violated both morality and true religious principles. Using the media of his time — pamphlets, newspapers, and public meetings — he exposed its cruelty and urged society to rethink entrenched beliefs. Responding to such advocacy, Governor-General William Bentinck enacted Regulation XVII in 1829, formally banning sati and making participation a punishable offence.



Yet law alone could not undo centuries of cultural conditioning. Even after abolition, instances of sati occurred, particularly in rural Rajasthan. The most infamous modern case was that of Roop Kanwar in 1987, when an eighteen-year-old woman immolated herself in Deorala. Far from being universally condemned, her death was initially celebrated by some as a glorious sacrifice. But this time, the media's role was decisive. Graphic coverage of the event ignited nationwide outrage, with women's groups, activists, and civil society organisations demanding stronger action. The result was the Commission of Sati (Prevention) Act, 1987, which not only criminalised sati but also banned its glorification through temples, songs, or rituals.

Equally important was the role of society. With the spread of education, urbanisation, and women's empowerment, attitudes toward widowhood shifted. Women began to claim their voices in public life, and younger generations challenged the old honour-based logic. Gradually, sati lost its cultural legitimacy and came to be seen not as devotion but as patriarchal violence. Today, Rani Sati Dadi is remembered with reverence as a goddess, but society firmly rejects sati as a practice.

The history of sati shows how honour culture can distort values and justify cruelty, but it also shows that traditions are not immutable. Through legal reform, reformist activism, and the power of the media, society was able to reject a system that robbed women of agency and life itself.



Its legacy, however, remains a cautionary tale. Though sati has been abolished, the same logic of honour continues to manifest in modern honour crimes such as forced marriages, restrictions on women's freedom, and so-called honour killings. Just as the eradication of sati required the combined efforts of law, society, and media, so too does the struggle against these contemporary practices. Only then can honour be reclaimed as a value of dignity rather than a weapon of control.



मौत का चूड़ा

POETRY



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नई नहीं, बचपन से ये सुनी कहानी
ऐतिहासिक हैं ये, ये कथा पुरानी

बारह साल की बेटी हुई क्या, उसे विदा करा दिया
बाप- दादा के उम्र के आदमी से उसका निकाह करा दिया
शादी हुए साल ना हुआ, पति तोह उसका चल बसा
मगर बेटी को ढाल ना मिला, और उसका समय भी शेष हुआ

विधवा को घर में रखोगे, तोह पाप तोह अलग चढ़ेगा ही
तोह बलि चढ़ादो उस नन्ही सी जान, खून में पली बेटी की
चूड़े में मौत के घाट उतारा, अब चूड़े में संसार छोड़े जापुगी
बेटी क्या हो जो सम्मान के खातिर अग्नि नहीं सह जापुगी

गोद में जिसके खेला करती, अब वही चिता पपु बाँध रहा
अग्नि स्नान कराने, उस ही पिता ने मौत के घाट जाने कहा
बिन बोले जोड़े में सजी, अब बिन बोले चिता को साजे
पिता ने बेचा, पति ने छोड़ा, अब तोह आँसू की डंका बाजे
बारह में डोली निकली, तेरह में अर्थी
मौत तोह पति की हुई तोह भस्म हुए क्यों लड़की

बेटी होती ही है क्यों, आती बनकर कुदरत का फरमान
बल्ली चढ़ाओ, बदले में पाओ, आन बान शान महान
यही तोह उपयोग बचा है, बड़ा करके देदो बलिदान
क्युकी जान से ज्यादा भावे तुम्हे, इज्जत और स्वाभिमान

घमंड का तराजू

POETRY



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मालिक तेरा है भगवान, मगर उसका मालिक तू
लड़की इमानत है तेरी, हो उसका खून या रूह
लड़की है तो लड़की रहे, सम्मान तो उनकी होती है
बेटी जिनकी कैद पंछी जैसे दिन रात को रोती है

छूट दे दोगे तोह लड़की हाथ से निकल जायेगी
पंख लगा कर परियों जैसे फुर्र से उड़ जायेगी
ढाल बनो तुम उसकी, इज्जत तोह उसके सर है
चिड़िया भी तोह रह लेती है बिन अपने पर के

प्यार किया तोह डरना क्या, ये कह तोह दिया किताबो ने
मगर अब्बा नहीं मानेंगे भी सीखा है किताबो से
शान के भूके, या खून के प्यासे, बेटी तोह बली चढ़ेगी ही
जब जीने नहीं दिया चैन से, तोह मौत क्यों सुकून की मिलेगी

लाज छीनने वाले की तोह लाज बचालो तुम
मगर लड़की की इज्जत उछाल कर खाल उधेड़ो तुम
जिस भी भगवान का नाम ले कर, सम्मान के सर कुरबानी चढ़ाओगे
उस घर में ना भगवान आएगा ना सम्मान, बस लहू की नदियाँ बहाओगे

स्वाभिमान के चक्रव्यूह में दंड भेद सब भूलोगे
जब घमंड को अपनी बेटी से भारी मान कर तोलोगे

A WOMB'S BLOOD, A GRAVE'S SILENCE

POETRY



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A young sheep with fleece so white,
She looked real pretty and bleat real low,
She was always taught to do so,
She was reared for this very purpose,
To be the sparkling acrobat in their little circus,
The untouchable sheep locked in a pen,
But what happens if the fleece turns red then,
It's a natural thing all cattle bleed the same,
But who was to tell the shepherd's son
That it was normal and the sheep was truly tame,
The shepherd's wife hid the truth in shame,
And when her son was done the sheep was worse than lame,
Her body lay in her own cot,
Sheets bloody with truth no one ever sought,
Who was to save the poor sheep when,
She wasn't safe from her own family's men,
The shepherd's son was pulled back and scolded,
The shepherd's wife apologised for him, hands folded,
But she faced the others when she did so,
Not a tear shed in the name of the sheep who no one will know,
The poor sheep massacred in her own bed,
All for bleeding, like every woman; between her legs, red.

HEARTS THROWN TO BLADE

POETRY



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All's fair in love and war,
But you weren't fair when her chance came,
All she did was fall in love,
But you pulled the noose to keep her tame,
She pleaded you to understand, begged you to accept,
Asked you to listen with the little kindness you had left,
But the knife plunged in and her pleas were forgotten,
As her body stayed there, decayed and rotten,
She looked for warmth in you, but she wasn't taught,
That warmth these days, is just sold not bought,
Love is love and love is true,
But what did love ever do for you,
It gave you your son's corpse, wrapped in prestige,
It gave you daughters buried for the renown you preach,
Yes, of course, love is at fault,
The blade did the deed but because it was called,
The hand holding it was merely teaching a lesson for free,
Don't fall for someone who falls below your degree,
Love is a blessing, love isn't a crime,
But only till it's inside the line,
Don't step out, the feet that do, never return,
Except in a shroud, ready to be set alight and burn,
Kneeling in the temple, a gun to her temple,
At the wake of the pride that fell silent with her,
I pray for your virtue that you left at her feet,
As the vices of horror pull your honour underneath.

THE MANTHAN SELECT ARTICLES

**“WEAPONISED HONOUR,
DISTORTED VALUES: THE ROLE OF
LAW, SOCIETY, AND MEDIA IN
ERADICATING HONOUR CULTURE
AND CRIMES”**



As part of the ‘Manthan’ Initiative, the workshop registrations included a window for UG & PG Law Students - hailing from all National, State & Private Law Universities & Colleges - to participate & contribute to the Memoir by submitting 700-word Write-Ups based on the given topic.

Out of all the submissions, including those from Xavier Law School, the Top 10 Submissions, based on a set Scrutiny Criteria, have been herewith published, and credited to the respective Authors. The Best Submission has been awarded the ‘UDGAM Award for Best Insight’, and distinctively labelled as such.

REDEFINING HONOUR

RECLAIMING HONOUR FOR THE WORTHY

SHREYA ROY

The West Bengal National University of Juridical Sciences (WBNUJS)

The word “honour” in India has emerged and disguised itself as a sophisticated version of the phrase barbarism. Honour Crimes in India are not just something based on meaningless traditions, but it is beyond that, where women, daughters, lovers, family, and even men are targeted. These crimes are not crimes of passion, but of power and control, and every incident is calculated, deliberate, and systematic, and is passed as a tragic necessity instead of a crime.

What is unsettling for the author is the vocabulary of “honour” crime, as it glorifies the executioner and devalues the victim. By using such phrases, whose honour are we actually protecting? We must ask ourselves why we shy away from calling honour crimes by their real term, “social assassination”- of autonomy, dignity, and integrity, not only of the individual but also of society. If studied carefully, every incident of so-called honour crime will shed light on the fact that power never lies with the individual but with the group. India’s honour killing cases, like the recent Noida honour killing, Tirunelveli honour killing, the infamous Manoj and Babli honour killing case, or any other case, are all repeated reminders that breaking the boundaries of caste, religion, and gender will put one at risk of extinction.

The law provides a remedy, but only in theory. It does not see what it needs to see and how it is required to be seen. Honour Killings are still prosecuted under the ordinary homicide provisions, under the Indian Criminal Justice Administration System, even after the revamped set of new Criminal Laws. The social motive and the personal motive are not acknowledged, neither is there a separate national legislation dedicated to honour killings, nor any aggravated form of punishment to deter the perpetrators. Moreover, the Police treat the murders as private family disputes. Despite progressive judgments passed by the Supreme Court in cases like *Shakti Vahini* (2018), state-wise implementation remains poor because of a lack of a central guideline for all the States. Courts also oscillate between these judgments and even protecting family prestige, which sometimes results in a reduction of sentences. What is striking is the faith even victims have in the legal system, despite setbacks. Kausalya Shankar, who is today an entrepreneur, had become a victim of honour killing at the age of 19. Despite the Madras High Court overturning convictions of the accused and even acquitting her father, she has not lost hope, has filed multiple appeals to the Supreme Court, and has said that “the law is the only way”.

The primary drafter of our Indian Constitution, B.R. Ambedkar, had intended upon “constitutional morality” and cautioned that if constitutional morality is only in the text and not a disposition, it becomes meaningless.

He asserted that society needs to cultivate a sense of moral discipline, which will enable it to uphold the dignity of an individual over ingrained societal prejudice. As seen in honour killings, Ambedkar’s concept of “morality of the multitude” still constrains India’s collective

conscience, rather than the morality of law. Families poison their daughters, kill one of the lovers, khap panchayats ordering death are all done out of anxiety that old hierarchies are diminishing, that they are losing their power of controlling the society, and are done without legal justifications.

While the society that is complicit in it rationalises honour killings, the media, with some exceptions, either romanticizes or sensationalises it.

According to the author, real change can happen only when the media, society, and law unite to celebrate the rebels rather than the ones who punish. This would include amplifying voices like Kausalya, who firmly stands to uphold her husband's dignity, and writers and filmmakers, who document resistance from within the storm.

The harsh reality in India is that the enemy is not only the murderer but also the quiet bystander who keeps shut out of fear, the police personnel who file a routine murder charge, and the editor who fabricates "a tragic love story". The root lies in our willingness to look away, ignore, and let the collective code take precedence over personal rights.

Let us demand a law that punishes not only the murderers, but also provides an aggravated form of punishment, and punishes the conspirators, abettors, as well as police officials who fail to protect individual autonomy. A law that does not shy away from calling honour killings by its real name. Let us follow Ambedkar's call for constitutional morality, which does not defer to customs. For justice and hope to prevail, let honour be restored to the worthy.



इज्जत VS. JUSTICE

WHOSE VERDICT COUNTS?

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Every year, in India's heartlands, lives are buried not under soil but under the weight of "honour." Call it **इज्जत**, call it **मर्यादा**, call it **सम्मान** - the word changes, but blood remains red. Ask the railway tracks of Rohtak, the mango orchards of Uttar Pradesh, the rooftops of Haryana; they know the stories too well. These aren't all just tidy tales of star-crossed lovers. They are women strangled for wearing jeans, Dalit men beaten for riding a horse at their own wedding, Muslims dragged for skinning cattle, and families exiled because a daughter spoke. Honour is control dressed up as virtue - weaponised, worshipped, and passed down as tradition.

Sandhya was seventeen. She spoke to a boy in another caste. One night, her muffler became a noose. Officially, it was "suicide." But a different story was whispered. The police wrote her name in a file. Did that file stop the funeral? These killings are assaults on the Constitution. Article 21 is not poetry; it promises life with dignity. Article 14, equality. Articles 19 and 15 promise speech, association, and protection from discrimination. The Supreme Court has addressed this: khap panchayats are "kangaroo courts"; lynching - "affront to the rule of law"; consenting adults have a right to marry across caste. Fine words. But do they shield the neck? We must stop pretending that more rules alone will save lives. Rules don't stop pyres from burning. What we need is not repetition but revolution in how law is lived.

The pattern is: *exposure, outrage, pressure, reform*. Let's be the pressure. In Jordan, the 2017 repeal of Article 308 came after women like Abeer and countless survivors spoke out against the 'marry-your-rapist' law. In Pakistan, the brutal 2016 honour killing of *Qandeel Baloch* by her own brother forced Parliament to close the 'pardon loophole' that shielded families in honour killings. Law lives by example, and these are the testimonies.

Firstly, we must name the crime. Honour killings hiding under general murder are invisible. Make a specific offence with aggravated punishment, like Section 304B IPC did for dowry. Make the law recognise the ecosystem that kills. It is rarely one hand. Panchayat decrees, community conspiracies, WhatsApp mobs, they're all accomplices. The law must prosecute not just the killer but the collective, exactly what the BNS recognises under provisions on common intention (group liability in Section 103(2)) and criminal conspiracy, where every hand in the chain is held responsible. Like in *Shakti Vahini v. Union of India* (2018), the Supreme Court held entire khap panchayats accountable for honour killings; and more recently, the Allahabad High Court halted a lynching probe in the *Moradabad case of Shahedeen Qureshi* because police had charged it as a general murder instead of under Section 103(2) BNS, which explicitly covers mob murders driven by hate and identity. Prosecutors must stop treating honour as sentiment and start treating it as a conspiracy.

Protection as entitlement. Safe houses, relocation, witness protection - these cannot be cosmetic fixes rolled out after funerals. They must be enforceable rights with budgets, sealed transfers, protected identities, and police officers punished for inaction. In the *Manoj-Babli* case, the couple begged for safety. No one came. Punishment after death is nothing but cold comfort. Count the dead. NCRB cannot blink and call the vanished "miscellaneous." A National Register of Honour Crimes is needed so policy is driven by truth, not denial. Education, in plain language. Schools must teach Ambedkar and Periyar, and stories of those who chose life over custom.

Public campaigns must shout in local tongues: “समाज की इज्जत खुद से नहीं मिलती।”

Cinema must stop romanticising control as love and media laundering crimes as “family disputes.” Call them what they are: constitutional assaults. Report the ecosystem, who called the meeting, who circulated the message, and who stood silent.

Most of all, we must stand beside the living. Protection is a demand, not a favour. Let courts move from condolence to prevention. It is not victims who dishonour families. Families, mobs, and complicit States dishonour the Constitution.

इज्जत का अर्थ मरना नहीं, जीना है।

The choice before India is blunt: cling to caste's rust, or uphold the republic. There's no honour in killing, only shame in staying silent. Let courts issue protection orders before the pyre. Let every threatened pair have a legal hotline, swift relocation, witness anonymity, and officers charged for failure. Let the Republic breathe; let the living live. Not tomorrow, not later. *But now.*



HONOUR OR HORROR

THE UNHOLY TRINITY OF WITCH-BRANDING IN INDIA

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Superstition and patriarchal control in India are widespread social problems that continue to harm under the guise of 'honour'. One such practice is 'Witch-Branding', where individuals, especially women, are accused of sorcery for suffering misfortunes or seeking their rights, leading to ostracization, humiliation, and even death. By recognizing it as an 'honour', communities justify its persistence and reputation. In the name of honour, people, especially women, become scapegoats whenever something 'unfortunate' occurs. Thus, witch-branding is a form of violence disguised as honour preservation.

Honour in India is often equated with the purity and strength of women. However, when they 'deviate' from patriarchal roles and assert their autonomy, accusations follow. Witch-branding silences voices, showing the world that they have restored their honour. By portraying them as repositories of dishonour, communities weaponize gender to reserve control. The National Crime Records Bureau (N.C.R.B) reveals that Assam records the highest number of witch-branding-related deaths, with victims mostly from Adivasi communities. Between 2001 and 2016, 2,468 murders were committed where witch-branding was recorded as the primary motive. The Supreme Court, in the case of *Shakti Vahini vs. Union of India* (2018), has critically noted that witch-branding must be recognized as an aspect of honour crime, as this distorted sense damages lives.

Superstitions are unclear to people, but they still follow it because it is deeply rooted in society. Witch-branding is less about belief in magic or supernatural causality and more about controlling freedom and limiting personal choices, while also concealing economic and social motives too. The underlying manipulation and domination often go unnoticed, allowing the ritual to persist unchallenged, until the media and law together step in. Media can either amplify stigma or dismantle its influence. It plays a dual role in fighting against it. On one hand, sensitive coverages stigmatize victims, and on the other, news and awareness campaigns draw attention. Civil society groups, like the 'All Assam Students' Union', 'Association for Social and Human Awareness (A.S.H.A.)', etc., have campaigned to redefine honour as dignity and equality, and not any inhuman superstitious activity. Several schools nowadays organize awareness programs, but such initiatives remain sporadic and underfunded, requiring support from state and national institutions. By reporting the flaws in the system, the media must bring to upfront the reality of the so-called superstition and patriarchy, which is a silent, yet serious form of violence against humanity, and help raise public awareness and compel authorities to take stern actions, without affecting the victim. So, it is quite clear that the media can illuminate the persisting crime that has been continuing over the years in the name of tradition.

But, even when media and law play their roles, neither can actually play in isolation, as it is in their convergence. In this concept, the law is not always winning as it alone falls short due to the gaps in proper implementation, grave injustice to the constitutional rights, and the victims are silenced forcefully. Despite the existence and implementation of statutory norms like the 'Jharkhand Witchcraft Prevention Act (2015)', 'Odisha Prevention of Witch-Hunting Act (2013)', etc., it is revealed that the enforcement is quite rickety. Cases never tend to go any further; the survivors struggle to register their cases, and so the law currently is more reactive than preventive.

Witch-branding shows how honour is misused through superstition. Adopting severe protocols is essential to prevent it. Stakeholders must address such cases with vigilance and firmness with the help of proper educational programs amongst the laymen. Honour must mean dignity and equality, not control and domination. In India, a 'developing country', witch-hunt or witch-branding sadly persists as a grim reminder that patriarchy and fear of superstition still rule and are above all. The real change in society will be visible and will come only when we work together to protect people and stop violence done in the name of tradition; a society where justice is not delayed, voices are not ignored, and all are protected equally from cruelty, masked as culture. 'Viksit Bharat' cannot shine while its women bleed under the crusade curse, disguised as honour.



WITCHCRAFT ACCUSATIONS

HONOUR, GENDER, AND VIOLENCE IN RURAL INDIA

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"I used to dream about the time I had dignity in my life. I also have nightmares about the time they stole my dignity."

- Ana Pawar, a Survivor of Witch-Hunting

INTRODUCTION

When women are murdered for witch-hunting, their property is divided among male relatives. This encapsulates, witchcraft accusations in rural India are far more than mere superstition—they are a sophisticated mechanism of honor-based violence that systematically targets women who cross patriarchal boundaries.

Women asserting autonomy are punished under what Srijita Roy (2025) calls "gendered moral governance." Through Kimberlé Crenshaw's intersectionality, it is evident that caste, class, and age compound this vulnerability. Supporting this, Dev Nathan and Govind Kelkar's (2021) study of 110 cases from five Indian states shows that between 95–100% of victims are women.

The most compelling evidence for the honor-violence connection lies in property-related accusations, ActionAid's 2021 study reveals that in Odisha, 83% of witch-hunting cases occur in six districts where widows frequently inherit significant assets. In Jharkhand's Santhal communities, 78% of accusations target women with property rights, while 82% involve male family members as primary accusers. This reveals how honor restoration directly serves material interests—when women possess economic rights, they are systematically branded as sources of evil to justify dispossession.

WITCH-HUNTING AND RULE OF LAW

The Indian Constitution upholds the rule of law, requiring state power to be exercised transparently, uniformly, and in accordance with human rights principles. However, despite India's common law framework, its implementation is uneven.

It represents an egregious violation of fundamental rights enshrined in Articles 14 (equality before law), 15 (prohibition of discrimination), and 21 (right to life and personal liberty). The practice constitutes what feminist legal scholar Upendra Baxi terms "constitutional morality breach," where customary honor codes override constitutional protections for women. West Bengal's legal landscape remains particularly vulnerable, as the state lacks specific anti-witch-hunting legislation despite the Calcutta High Court's 2016 directives in *Moyna Murmu v. State of West Bengal*.³ Justice Joymalya Bagchi's landmark judgment directed the state government to form expert committees, establish special cells, and ensure prompt action against perpetrators, yet implementation remains inadequate. The court's 2018 decision in *State of West Bengal v. Kali Singh* further emphasized the urgency of legislative intervention, noting that "when the motive of crime is ingrained in the psyche, judicial execution does not help."

Only eight states have passed specific legislation, leaving loopholes for offenders to exploit. While Bihar's 1999 Act, Jharkhand's 2001 Act, and Odisha's 2013 Act provide regional protections, they are inconsistently enforced and lack a clear constitutional mandate.

The Prevention and Prohibition of Witch-Branding and Witch-Hunting and Other Harmful Practices Bill, 2022, introduced in the Rajya Sabha, represents a crucial step toward national legislation. The bill addresses honor-based violence by distinguishing between cognizable and non-bailable offenses, as well as establishing special prosecutors, victim compensation, and rehabilitation.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

However, constitutional recognition of witch-hunting as a distinct form of honor-based violence warrants special protection under Article 15(3), which *empowers the state to make special provisions for women and children*. Research shows that witch-hunting functions as "*cultural crime*" requiring "*gender-sensitive institutional training for police officers, health workers, and local panchayat leaders*". West Bengal's civil society organizations like Swadhina acknowledge that despite awareness campaigns through street theatre and legal aid, "there is no collective action for a law". Most witch-hunting cases go unreported or are dropped due to inadequate investigations.

Rehabilitation efforts should go beyond compensation to address honor-based stigma and ensure community reintegration, while police training should emphasize the honor-violence nexus so officers can identify property disputes, family tensions, and community pressure as early warning signs of witch accusations.

Witchcraft accusations in rural India are not outdated superstitions, but rather tools of honor and gendered violence, frequently directed at women who assert their rights or inherit property. They demand immediate action—laws, empathy, and justice that protect women's dignity and security.



HONOUR KILLINGS TO HONOUR SUICIDES

CONSTITUTIONAL MORALITY V. SOCIAL MORALITY

SURAJIT GHOSH CHOWDHURY

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"Fiat justitia ruat caelum" - Let justice be done though the heavens fall

-Lucius Calpurnius Piso Caesoninus,

later upheld by Lord Mansfield (William Murray, 18th Century English Jurist)

INTRODUCTION

Every time the word 'honour' has been uttered in the history of society, the fundamental voice of women's freedom, individual liberty has been suppressed behind it. On one side, constitutional morality speaks of equality and dignity; whereas, on the other side, social morality condones murder and suicide in the name of the honour. Thus, at the centre of this conflict stands an eternal question based on Constitutional Morality or Social Morality, which will be the ultimate guide of India's democratic society?

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Historically, the concept of the 'honour' in Indian Society has been associated with caste purity and patriarchal control. For instance, Caste-based marriage control in ancient times, the practices of sati and Jauhar in the Middle Ages, and social conservatism against women's freedom in colonial era to all show that society has controlled the life and choices of the individual. In post-independence India, incidents like khap panchayats, anti-inter caste marriage murders and suicides are manifestations of that historical continuity. Thus where "Constitutional Morality" ensures individual freedom and dignity, and "Social Morality" still exerts a life-destroying influence.

ISSUES

1. "Social Honour vs Personal Freedom" - When the conservative view of society controls a women's life or death decision?
2. "Constitutional Morality vs Social Morality" - Even if the judiciary stands for individual rights, is society ready to accept that morality?
3. "Murder to Suicide as ending life in the name of honour" - When the family or society kills to protect 'honour', and the victim herself commits suicide to save 'honour'.
4. "Women's Autonomy vs Patriarchal Culture" - A women's right to choose her own life partner vs. the so-called 'honour' of the family.
5. "Rule of Law vs Khap Panchayat Culture" - Where the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023 and The Constitution are clear, how are the pressures and threats of rural social courts against human rights?

LEGAL FRAMEWORKS IN INDIA

In India, the BNS, 2023 (Section 103, 109, 61), the Evidence Act, 1872, the Constitution of India (Article 14, 15, 19, 21 & 39) the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955, the Special Marriage Act, 1954 are in force to curb crimes like honour killing and to protect individual freedoms and rights.

LANDMARK CASE LAWS IN INDIA

The judiciary has set several important precedents against honour killings. In *Lata Singh v. State of U.P.* (2006), the Supreme Court clarified that inter-caste or inter-religious marriages are not crimes and protection must be provided to the people. In *Arumugam Servai v. State of Tamil Nadu* (2011), the Supreme Court clarified that Khap Panchayats were declared illegal. In *Ballu Singh v. State of Rajasthan* (2016), the Rajasthan High Court sentenced the convicts for honour killings to life imprisonment and reaffirmed the marital freedom of the individual as a fundamental right. In the most important case *Shakti Vahini v. Union of India* (2018), the Supreme Court declared honour killings as a grave violation of human rights and directed every district administration to take preventive measures and protect the threatened couples and take prompt legal action. These judgements prove that constitutional morality will always prevail over social morality.

SUGGESTIONS

Considering the aforementioned issues, it is essential that multi-pronged measures are needed to prevent honour killings and honour suicides. Firstly, it is necessary to establish special courts to ensure strict law enforcement and speedy trial. Secondly, couples under threat should be protected by implementing safe houses. Thirdly, legal awareness and education should be spread at the rural level so that social prejudices can be broken. Fourthly, gender-sensitivity training should be provided to police and administration. Finally, the active participation of civil society and NGOs can play an important role in social change.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, if 'honour' takes away human life, then it is not honour but an inhuman social disease. Honour killing and honour suicide challenge the basic spirit of the constitution. Therefore, ensuring the protection of personal freedom in the light of the constitutional principles, strict enforcement of laws and changing the social mentality can be the only permanent solution.



ARTICLE

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INTRODUCTION

The state of having honour is roughly understood as dignity and respect and mutual regard which is not entirely true. Way too often has the concept of honour been misused and used as a tool to destroy lives. In India, “Family honour” is perhaps the most abused concepts and sanctified to defend acts of violence especially contrary to women and young married people who cross the socially accepted barriers of caste, religion and community, and so often. Such acts of violence, the most gruesome whose honour has been slaughtered is of so degraded a value and so empty of any notion of virtue and is nothing beyond sheer callousness and dominance. Society all by itself has to ponder whether law is the only tool to get rid of such a culture or whether they have to so deeply interrogate such a culture within which it is sociably acceptable to oppose the changing culture. Law is not enough for the society and the people who so easily tell should not honour such values.

LAW: BETWEEN CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHTS AND GROUND REALITIES

Guiding principles with liberty, equality and dignity is something that remains enshrined in the Indian Constitution. Every individual is guaranteed the “Right to life and liberty” by Article 21 that contains the freedom of marrying a partner own choice. The courts have consistently upheld this idea. The Supreme Court in *Lata Singh v. State of U.P.* (2006), categorically specified that adult citizens are free to marry across caste and religious lines. Later, in *Shakti Vahini v. Union of India* (2018), the Supreme Court heavily criticised the khap panchayats and directed authorities for taking strict measures against honour killings.

Yet despite such rulings, honour crimes continue to plague society. One major reason is the absence of a dedicated law to address them. At present, these acts are prosecuted under the Indian Penal Code most often as murder under Section 302. The Law Commission of India, in its 242nd Report (2012), had strongly recommended a separate law to specifically criminalize honour-based violence. However, legislative inaction has left a vacuum. Without such a law, justice in these cases often gets diluted, delayed or denied.

SOCIETY: FORGETTING PATRIARCHY AND HIERARCHY OF CASTE

At the root of honour-based crimes is a strict social code shaped by patriarchy and caste. In many families, the so-called “family reputation” takes priority over the well-being or even the lives of their children. A daughter who chooses her own partner without parental approval is often labelled as having shamed the family and in extreme cases, this can lead to violence or even her death in the name of pride.

To halt these patterns, society needs to let go of these warped moral principles. Controlling women’s choices or to what extent one protects the boundaries of the caste system cannot be the essence of true honour. Fortunately, these myths can be slowly disbanded through the activities of frontline organizations, women’s movements and local advocates.

MEDIA: MIRROR AND MESSENGER

Stereotypes affects the public perception of honour crime as media witness. While reporting has the potential to strip victims tear victims into object of pity, sensational form of reporting reinforces the stereotypes. On the other

hand, the media, through responsible journalism can easily point out the root causes of this violence, advocate legal action and shape public opinion on the issue.

TOWARDS ERADICATION: AN INTEGRATED APPROACH

Comprehensive Strategy to Eliminate Honour Crimes

- Special Legislation

There is an unequivocal need for a dedicated law that pertains specifically to honour-based violence. Such a law would need to go beyond punishing direct offenders to also include those who instigate or provide support to these acts, even if unofficial groups such as khap panchayats are involved.

- Police Training and Sensitisation

Police and other law enforcement agencies need to shift their understanding of honour crimes as private and family matters as well as cultural issues and instead, consider them highly serious violations of constitutional protections. Training must focus on changing police attitudes and behaviours to avoid victimisation and to assist survivors in a timely, compassionate, and fair manner.

- Responsible Media Practices

Media has a responsibility to report on these issues comprising crimes committed in the name of so-called honour in a responsible way. Reporting must go beyond minimizing the non-consensual exposure of dignity and privacy of survivors.

CONCLUSION: FROM HONOUR TO HUMANITY



For J. D. Y. Chandrachud in *Shafin Jahan v. Asokan K. M.* (2018), an individual can choose to marry whoever they wish. This and the ability to do so without limitations is greatly of personal importance. This is a world which we as a society must work towards a world in which the ability to choose is not accompanied by the threat of violence.

All this is devoid of true honor which indeed is not dominating the other gender and caste. It is

rather a reflection of our collective humanity. It must be the law which defends this honor, society which defends and the media which publicizes. It is only in this way that compassion and justice can get rid of the misplaced ideologies that cling to the society.



THE DEVIOUS CLOAK OF HONOUR

INDIA'S STRUGGLES FOR LIFE AND LIBERTY

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For centuries, blood has been shed, daughters buried, and lovers silenced in the name of honour. According to feminist scholar Kamla Bhasin, "When you kill a woman in the name of honour, you are not protecting culture, you are killing it" (Bhasin, 2006). Their voices, freedoms, and choices have been muffled under its devious cloak. This violence has spread so widely over time that people frequently overlook how cruel it is (Chakraborty, 2015).

In God's name—which God? Which God would consent to the taking of an innocent person's life? When a woman chooses independence or a girl dares to love, his honour is unaffected. It's those egocentric, misogynists who use God's name to excuse their tyranny. The Qur'an warns: "Whoever kills a soul...it is as if he has killed all of mankind" (Qur'an 5:32). The Bible reminds us: "So God created mankind in his own image, male and female he created them" (Genesis 1:27). Across faiths, the message is clear: women are not disposable, and innocent life is sacred. The statement "I have birthed you, I can kill you" is a ruthless defense of honour crimes. According to Hazrat Ali (RA), Children are unique individuals with their own destinies; they are not extensions of their parents' pride.

Gerda Lerner explains that because women were viewed as bearers of "purity" in the family, patriarchy was established by regulating their sexuality (Lerner, 1986). Therefore, even the smallest act by a woman, such as speaking too loudly, dressing freely, or marrying outside of her caste, could be viewed as a disgrace to the entire household. Deniz Kandiyoti refers to this double standard as the "patriarchal bargain," in which women protect their own honour by occasionally policing younger women (Kandiyoti, 1988).

No matter how progressive the law is, it frequently breaks down when it clashes with ingrained prejudices in society. As demonstrated in *Lata Singh v. State of Uttar Pradesh* (2006) and *Shakti Vahini v. Union of India* (2018), courts have acknowledged that two consenting adults have the freedom to choose love and marriage. Many lives are lost in the chasm between justice and judgment. On paper, the law is in place, but in small towns and villages, the khap panchayat, or family elder, still has more authority than the Constitution. Society, instead of condemning them, often applauds the killers as saviours of tradition. Tragically, we live in a society where parents would rather bury their daughters than see them marry across caste or religion.

The media frequently turns the language of honour that society whispers into a chorus. Popular culture has all too frequently normalized honour killings and exalted sacrifice in the name of family pride rather than questioning this skewed value. Cinema inadvertently sustains the myth that love defies survival across boundaries, romanticizing death and labelling eloping daughters as transgressors.

Killing in the name of God or silencing daughters does not bring real honour. Laws must be clear, strict, and effectively enforced, sending a strong message that violence in the name of "honour" will not be tolerated, but legislation alone is not enough. Education, public awareness, and community involvement can change the mindset that permits such crimes to continue. The media is also very important because films, web series, and television programs frequently normalize honour-based violence by depicting it as an inevitable result of social or familial "expectations". Media must exalt dignity, equality and justice, where true honour saves life. True honour shall be discerned in guardianship of liberty, the exaltation of equality, and the preservation of dignity, not in perpetuation of dominion, carnage, or dread.

THE HONOUR-CRIME NEXUS IN CONTEMPORARY TIMES

CONFRONTING THE INVISIBLE SCARS OF CORRECTIVE RAPE,
FORCED MARRIAGES AND DIGITAL HARASSMENT

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Honour culture has historically been exploited to rationalise violence and oppression, extending across generations. From the brutal practice of sati pratha to the persistence of child marriage, from the silent crime of female foeticide to the visible horror of honour killings—society has repeatedly cloaked injustice in the language of honour. In each case, the so-called protection of family or community reputation has outweighed individual rights, autonomy, and dignity. Those who are deemed to bring “shame” or “disgrace” upon a household, caste, or community—whether by choosing their partner, rejecting oppressive traditions, or simply being born female or queer—have often been made prime targets of harassment, marginalization and exclusion from mainstream society. The alibi of preserving reputation or tradition has been used to suppress individuality and justify crimes since time immemorial.

Once enshrined in practices like sati and female foeticide, honour culture has not disappeared even after these evil practices have been outlawed—in the modern context it has taken new and disgusting forms of Corrective rape, forced marriages, and social media bullying affecting victims through mental abuse, coercion, and attacks on LGBTQ+ rights in the name of protecting family or community “honour.” These are modern faces of an ancient problem: the weaponisation of honour. These acts, rooted in distorted values, strip individuals of their rights to dignity, autonomy, and equality. These practices are rooted in the same logic: suppress individuality and autonomy in the name of tradition, morality, or family reputation and cultural supremacy. In the digital age families, communities, or even strangers may target individuals—especially women, divorcees, remarried persons, or LGBTQIA+ individuals—with trolling, threats, or the non-consensual sharing of private content. This is presented as punishment for “dishonouring” traditions or reputations. While the Indian legal system provides remedies under various statutes, honour crimes are rarely recognized in their specific context.

Harassment in the form corrective rape, forced marriages inter alia social media bullying backed by the seal of honour culture is rooted in the misguided notions of control. It can have a detrimental effect on the mental health of an individual. Mental abuse is one of the most pervasive yet hidden forms of honour crime. It thrives on emotional manipulation, isolation, and shaming, often leaving victims voiceless and broken. While Indian law recognizes psychological cruelty in certain contexts, it does not explicitly treat it as an honour-based violation. While no physical force may be applied, the psychological harm is profound—leading to depression, anxiety, trauma, and in many cases, suicides.

While laws exist to punish acts like sexual assault, coercion, and cyber bullying the challenge lies in treating their contemporary forms not just as individual crimes but as manifestations of honour-based violence restricting personal freedom and perpetuating inequality. India still lacks a comprehensive law to prevent honour crimes. Communities must be educated to see personal autonomy as a value, not a threat to honour. Schools and colleges can play a key role in sensitization. Furthermore, families must be educated that “honour” lies in respecting individual dignity, not in silencing autonomy. Community engagement and awareness programs can challenge

normalized mental abuse. Legal protections as provided under BNS, DV Act and IT Act are necessary but insufficient without societal acceptance and responsible media representation.

In contemporary time social media has emerged as both a platform of liberation and a space of vulnerability. Individuals expressing their identities, political views, or personal choices online can become targets of trolling, cyberbullying, or honour-based threats. Yet, social media also offers unprecedented opportunities to challenge distorted notions of honour. Campaigns highlighting LGBTQIA+ rights, gender equality, and personal autonomy can reach millions, fostering empathy and sparking dialogue. By amplifying voices that resist honour-based oppression, the media can transform public perceptions and redefine honour as respect for individual dignity rather than conformity.

By working together, law, society, and media can reclaim the concept of honour—not as a tool of oppression, but as a reflection of dignity, empathy, and respect for one another. Only then can we build a society where personal choice is celebrated rather than condemned, and where “honour” no longer harms, but protects and upholds human rights.



THE PRICE OF PRIDE

SOCIETY, LAW, MEDIA AND THE END OF HONOUR KILLINGS



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A usual Sunday evening buzz was abruptly shattered by violence- the cold-blooded murder of a young life. The next morning, it was publicly exposed by a headline: "Honour Killing: 17-year-old girl shot by father, minor brother in Uttar Pradesh...the victim was said to be in a relationship with a boy from the area, which her family opposed". How does a notion designed for integrity and high moral fibre justify cold-blooded killing? This is the chilling contradiction of honour culture: honour is terrifyingly translated into justification for violence against those challenging prevailing norms. In traditional societies, a collective standing-called *izzat*(honour)/ *shaan* (pride)/ *naam* (reputation)- demands control, especially over family members. When this control is threatened by an autonomous choice, a presumptive stain (*kalank*) on the family's standing is assumed. To eliminate this stain, violence results in so-called "honour crimes". Although these actions may strike anybody who "betrays" the family, most of the weight lies on women and girls, highlighting strong patriarchy. The UNFPA estimates that approximately 5,000 women globally are murdered annually in honour killings. Ending this culture requires breaking down the societal norms that allow it, supported by consistent enforcement of laws and careful examination by the media.

The origins of honour culture lie in patriarchal structures that view a woman's body and decisions as property and symbols of the family's 'honour'. Any aberration: an inter-caste/ inter-religious wedding, an affair, or reporting sexual assault, is seen as an "unpardonable transgression" that brings shame. This extreme value distortion justifies murder to safeguard the intangible value of *izzat/shaan*. This dangerous attitude transcends religions and communities and are deeply rooted in the patriarchal institutions that legitimize them, often giving them the name of religious practice. The tragic tales of love over honour, from Shakespeare's '*Romeo and Juliet*' to the South-Asian tale- '*Laila Majnu*', underscores the terror of honour killing. This violence extends beyond thwarted romance to encompass any perceived offense, like challenging forced marriage, or being the victim of rape, revealing society's terrifying mindset. Purity code interpretations in certain Abrahamic cultures have traditionally been used to support close control over women. Cultural narratives, such as Sita's "Agni Pariksha" in the Ramayana, have also been used in Hindu society to reinforce female virtue as the defining test of sanctity. This cultural preoccupation, in which society tacitly supports violence to maintain social order, supplies the oxygen for honour crimes to persist.

The law has to be an unbending shield of individual rights. The Supreme Court of India has consistently asserted the primacy of Article 21 over any so-called cultural practice, a step towards solving this issue. In landmark judgments, especially against Khap Panchayats (caste councils), the judiciary has come down firmly. In the *Shakti Vahini v. Union of India*, the Court explicitly ordered that the government adopt "preventive, remedial, and punitive steps", stating the right to choose a partner fundamental to dignity, and that such violence sanctioned in gatherings is "wholly illegal". The purpose of the law is not merely punishing the offense but to de-legitimise the motive, re-labelling 'honour defence' as premeditated murder driven by gender-discrimination so that the police and subordinate courts are sensitized not to dismiss these as 'personal affairs'.

The media is a powerful, often complicated, force. Sensationalised, irresponsible journalism can inadvertently legitimize the motive by focusing on the 'clash of traditions' instead of the horror of the deed. An effective and ethical media strategy requires: counter-narrating by continuously labelling such acts as gender-based murder and human rights violations; empowering/educating communities by highlighting legal recourse, amplifying survivors'

testimonies, and quoting international analyses (such as the UNFPA) to generate public awareness. The media must stand up for independent thinking and ethical values and constantly tear down such crimes' cultural acceptance.

Abolishing weaponised honour needs a systemic change for which, clarity in legislation and sensitisation of judges and police are essential. Prevention of such crimes involves educational reform to advance gender equality and human rights at the grassroots, changing society's focus from controlling people to granting them autonomy. Ultimately, true societal honour is not found in the obedience of its women, but in its unwavering commitment to life, liberty, and human rights.



ARTICLE

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INTRODUCTION

"We don't live in a world in which there exists a single definition of honour anymore, and it's a fool that hangs onto the traditional standards and hopes that the world will come around him." In this analysis, the author focuses on honour crime as a general species, with a particular emphasis on honour killing, a terrible genus that needs to be eliminated. Human Rights Watch defines "honour killings" as the acts of violence, usually murder, committed by male family members against female family members, who are held to have brought dishonour upon the family. Honour Killing, also known as shame killing guillotines the constitutional principles of individual liberty and freedom of choice. The social evil persists due to deep rooted orthodox, feudal mindsets as well as the wrongful interpretation of the term 'honour'. The study examines the role of media, society & law in eliminating this social evil.

ROLE OF MEDIA

The omnipresent nature of media gives it the power to paint a picture that is both real and authentic. Media has the power to shape and influence public opinion, which can help eradicate Honour Crimes across jurisdictions. Though Media sensationalism and trial can skew facts, fabricate victim-blaming stories, and even widen socioeconomic gaps. Investigative Journalism as well as Social Media Campaign can support victims' voices and can also expose the social evils behind Honour Killing.

ROLE OF SOCIETY

Honour killing cases are more prevalent in a few North Indian states, like Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan, Haryana, Jharkhand and Punjab; it is being increasingly reported in the South too, including Karnataka. The National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) records that the number of honour killings reported in India was 25 each in 2019 and 2020 and 33 in 2021. But these figures are based on those reported, and the number could be much higher than mentioned. Society can also aid the noble cause of eradicating the social evil by encouraging community leadership along with grass root advocacy, youth programs and public denouncements. Women are not the only victims of the barbaric acts of honour crimes; in some cases, young men also fall prey to these atrocious acts and have to endure violent treatment from the family of the young woman with whom they have fallen in love. With. In the modern world, inspired by liberty and personal autonomy, orthodox feudal perceptions have little to no significance and that there is nothing honourable in honour killing.

ROLE OF LAW

There is no law in India that directly addresses the issue of Honour Killing except an unenforced bill "The National Commission for Protection from Honour Crime Act, 2024" which defines "Honour Crime" and mentions punitive measures as well. Since there is no enforced law for the offense of Honour Killing, the accused can be charged with various offenses under the Indian Penal Code or under the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita. It was held that by the Hon'ble Supreme Court that there is no bar on these marriages under the Hindu Marriage Act. The Court further held that *"choice of woman in choosing her partner in life is a legitimate constitutional right. It is founded on individual choice that is recognised in the Constitution under Article 19, and such a right is not expected to succumb to the*

concept of “class honour” or “group thinking”. It is because the sense of class honour has no legitimacy even if it is practised by the collective under some kind of a notion.”

which further strengthens the right of a person to choose his or her spouse. The Apex Court also addressed the need to eliminate this social evil and opined that there is nothing honourable in such killings and further gave directions in the form of guidelines to eradicate the social evil. The court directed the state governments to initiate disciplinary proceedings against government officers in specific situations in cases pertaining to honour killing. The personal freedom to choose has been reinforced when Honour killings was unequivocally recognized as among the rarest of rare cases deserving death punishment which has successfully deterred such barbaric atrocity to an extent.

CONCLUSION

“Assertion of choice is an insegregable facet of liberty and dignity....” In a constitutional democracy, individual choice in marriage is protected as part of liberty and autonomy. No custom or societal notion of “honour” can override these fundamental values, and any act of violence in their name deserves the sternest condemnation and punishment. The question that came to the authors mind was whether the elders of a family or a clan have any right to take away the life of the young who choose to get married without the consent of the elders or rather against the wishes of the elders, or rather against the customary practices of the clan? According to the author the answer to this can never be affirmative. The older order has to give way to the new. The author concludes by quoting Simone Weil, who said, *“Liberty, taking the word in its concrete sense, consists in the ability to choose.”* This power to choose is fundamental for protecting individual autonomy against any atrocity in the name of “honour”.





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The background of the poster is a deep blue space filled with numerous small, bright white stars. On the left side, there is a vertical, textured blue structure that resembles a nebula or a close-up of a celestial body's surface. A bright, glowing blue light source is positioned in the center-left, creating a radial burst of light and a trail of white particles that extends towards the right.

an **UDGAM2025** CHAPTER
ONE
16-17 OCTOBER *publication*